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LEGENDS OF SAINT PATRICK

By the same Author.

I. THE INFANT BRIDAL, and other Poems. (Macmillan.)

II. MAY CAROLS. 2nd Edition. (Richardson.)

III. POEMS, Miscellaneous and Sacred. (Burns and Lambert.)

THE LEGENDS

OF

SAINT PATRICK

BY

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TO THE MEMORY

of

WORDSWORTH

PREFACE.

In most parts of Ireland the traveller hears quaint stories about Saint Patrick, and sometimes perhaps imagines that the Saint visited the island for the benefit of witty guides, and to promote mirth in wet weather. He would hardly suspect that, during fourteen centuries, the subject of these stories has been regarded, at countless hearths, as the greatest man and the greatest benefactor that ever trod the Irish soil, and that there remains respecting him a vast cycle of legends, serious, pathetic, and profound. It could not have been otherwise. Ireland was a land of legends many ages before Saint Patrick visited it. There existed in all parts of it Colleges of Bards, whose duty it was to preserve in song the history of every clan and ruling House. Such a people could not have

forgotten the heroic man who had led them forth in their Exodus from the bondage of Pagan darkness. In many instances, doubtless, as the tale became a tradition, the foliage of an ever-active popular imagination gathered round the central stem of fact; but the fact remained.

To this class of legends belong the poems respecting Saint Patrick and the old Irish warrior-poet, Oisìn, with whom the modern reader is better acquainted under the name of Ossian. They are to this day chaunted in those parts of Ireland in which the Gaelic language is spoken, and consist chiefly of poetic contentions in which the blind bard, represented as the guest of Saint Patrick in his friendless old age, responds to the Saint's preaching by singing the praises of his father, Fionn (the Fingal of Macpherson), of his son, Oscar, and of the friends of his youth. Oisìn had died two centuries before St. Patrick's mission; and, earlier still, the whole of that polity to which he was devoted had perished, with his son and the warriors he loved so well, upon the fatal field of Gahbra: yet those dialogues, referred by Professor O'Curry to the ninth and tenth centuries, though disfigured

by subsequent interpolations, do not the less vividly illustrate the relations, partly friendly, partly hostile, between the new religion of Ireland and her old world of bards and chiefs. Many of them are to be found, beside those included in the publications of the 'Ossianic Society,' in a striking volume published by J. Hawkins Simpson, Esq., who, during a residence in Mayo, had often been struck by the vehement effect they produced on the listeners. It is called, 'Oisìn, the Bard of Erin.'[1] The first two of the poems relating to Oisìn in the present volume embody, in substance, two of the traditional Ossianic poems of Ireland: and several of the other poems in lyrical metres are drawn from the same sources.

But the earlier legends respecting Saint Patrick are at once the more authentic and the nobler. Not a few have a character of the sublime; many are pathetic; some have a profound meaning under a strange disguise; but their predominant character is their brightness and gladsomeness. A large tract of Irish history is dark: but the time of Saint Patrick, and the three centuries which

[1] See note on page 244.

succeeded it, were her time of joy. Here we tread no land of sorrows or of wrongs. That chronicle is a song of gratitude and hope, as befits the story of a nation's conversion to Christianity, and in it the bird and the brook blend their carols with those of angels and of men. It was otherwise with the Ossianic legends connected with Saint Patrick. A poet once remarked, while studying the frescoes of Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel, that the Sibyls are always sad, while the Prophets alternated with them are joyous. In the legends of the Patrician Cycle the chief-loving old Bard is ever mournful, for his face is turned to the past glories of his country: while the Saint is always bright, because his eyes are set on to the glory that has no end.

Those higher legends, the subject of the blank verse poems in this work, which, however, do not profess to keep close to the original sources except as regards their spirit, and the manners of the time described are to be found chiefly in some very ancient lives of Saint Patrick, the most valuable of which is the 'Tripartite Life,' ascribed by Colgan to the century after the Saint's death, though it

has not escaped later additions. The work was long lost: but two copies of it were re-discovered, one of which has been recently translated by an eminent Irish scholar, Mr. Hennessy. This translation, as well as translations of several other ancient remains, enrich the appendix of a work, the high merits of which have gained for it a wide circulation, the 'Life of Saint Patrick, by M. F. Cusack.' The miracles recorded in the 'Tripartite Life' are neither the most marvellous nor the most interesting portion of that Life. Whether regarded from the religious or the philosophic point of view, few things can be more instructive than the picture which it delineates of human nature in a period of critical transition, and the dawning of the Religion of Peace upon a race barbaric, but far indeed from savage. That wild race regarded it doubtless as a notable cruelty, when the new Faith discouraged an amusement so popular as battle. But in many respects they were in sympathy with that Faith. That race was one in which the affections, as well as the passions, retained an unblunted ardour; and where Nature is strongest and least corrupted it most feels the need of something higher than itself,

its interpreter and its supplement. It prized the family ties, like the Germans recorded by Tacitus; and it could not but have been drawn to Christianity, which consecrated them. Its morals were pure, and it had not lost that simplicity to which so much of spiritual insight belongs. Admiration and wonder were among its chief habits: it would not have been repelled by Mysteries in what professed to belong to the Infinite; nor did it desire a religion smaller than the human mind itself—a religion capable of being, not only apprehended and believed, but comprehended in its fulness and measured in all its parts. Lawless as it often was, it abounded also in loyalty, generosity, and self-sacrifice: it was not therefore untouched by the records of martyrs, the principle of self-sacrifice, or the doctrine of a great Sacrifice. It loved children and the poor; and Christianity made the former the exemplars of faith, and the latter the eminent inheritors of the Kingdom. On the other hand, all the vices of the race ranged themselves against the new religion, as well as many of its jealousies.

In the main the institutions and traditions of

Ireland were favourable to Christianity. She had preserved in a large measure the patriarchal system of the East. Her clans were families, and her chiefs were patriarchs who led their households to battle, and seized or recovered the spoil. Those clans were proud of the strong rule they obeyed; for it was a rule interwoven with the affections. Ireland had never been subject to the Roman Empire; the State was to her a less familiar idea than the Family, although her monarchy had run back to such early times; and civil ties were but domestic ties on a larger scale. To such a people the Christian Church announced herself as a great family—the family of man. Her genealogies went up to the first parent; and her rule was parental rule. The kingdom of Christ was the household of Christ; and its portions in all lands were the tribes of a larger Israel. Its laws were living traditions; and for traditions the Irish had ever retained the Eastern reverence; as well as—despite an idol-worship which seems however not to have obliterated more spiritual aspirations and recollections—the great Theistic instinct of the East.

In the Druids no formidable enemy was found.

It was the Bards who wielded the predominant social influence. As in Greece, where the sacerdotal power was small, the Bards were the priests of the national Imagination, and round them all moral influences had gathered themselves. The Gael required that even his laws should be recited to him in verse. The Bards had at once in part 'made the laws' of the country, and 'written its ballads:'—it was no wonder therefore that they were strong. Many of them were hereditary functionaries; they lived in regal state, and travelled with large retinues. Their colleges had been a sort of Pagan convents, as subsequently, the Christian convents looked like spiritual clans. They were jealous of their rivals; but those rivals won them by degrees. Secknall and Fiacc were Christian Bards, trained by St. Patrick, who is said to have also brought a bard with him from Italy. At a later time St. Columba preserved the whole Order from destruction, when the excessive wealth and pride of the Bard-Establishment had kindled a revolt against it. The beautiful legend in which the Saint loosened the tongue of the dumb child was an apt emblem of Christianity im-

parting to the Irish race the highest use of its natural faculties. The Christian clergy turned to account the Irish traditions, as they had made use of the Pagan temples, purifying them first. The Christian Religion looked with a genuine kindness on whatever was human, except so far as the stain was on it; and while it resisted to the face what it disapproved, it also, in the Apostolic sense, 'made itself all things to all men.' The early Irish Church was as hospitable to the old Bard-songs and social usages of Ireland as the Patrick of the Ossianic legends had been to her blind Bard. Her friendliness found an emblem in the legend which represents Saint Kieran, when the famous old Pagan Epic, the 'Tain bo Chuailnè,' long lost, had been so marvellously recovered, as sacrificing his favourite little heifer, and thus supplying the parchment needed in order to commend the treasure to posterity—an act still recorded in the title of one of the oldest of Ireland's MS. Volumes, 'The Book of the Dun Cow.' As legislator, Saint Patrick waged no needless war against the ancient Laws of Ireland. He purified them, and he amplified them, discarding only what was unfit

for a nation made Christian. Thus was produced the great 'Book of the Law,' or 'Senchus Mohr,' compiled A.D. 439.

The Irish people received the gospel gladly. The great and the learned, in other nations the last to believe, among them commonly set the example. With the natural disposition of the race an appropriate culture had concurred. It was one which at least did not fail to develope the imagination, the affections, and a great part of the moral being, and which prompted ardent natures to find their rest in spiritual things, rather than in material or conventional. That culture, without removing the barbaric, had singularly blended it with the refined. It had created among the people an exquisite appreciation of the beautiful, the pathetic, and the pure. The early Irish chronicles, as well as songs, show how strong among them that sentiment had ever been. The Borromean Tribute, for so many ages the source of relentless wars, had been imposed in vengeance for an insult offered to a woman; and a discourtesy shown to a poet had overthrown an ancient dynasty. The education of an Ollambh occupied twelve years; and in the third century,

the time of Oisìn and Fionn, the military rules of the Feinè included provisions which the chivalry of later ages might have been proud of. It was a wild, but not an unfeeling time. An unprovoked affront was regarded as a grave moral offence; and severe punishments were ordained, not only for detraction, but for a word, though uttered in jest, which brought a blush on the cheek of a listener. Yet an injury a hundred years old could meet no forgiveness, and the life of man was war! It was not that laws were wanting; a code, minute in its justice, had proportioned a penalty to every offence, and specified the *Eric* which was to wipe out the blood-stain in case the injured party renounced his claim to right his own wrong. It was not that hearts were hard—there was at least as much pity for others as for self. It was that anger was implacable, and that where fear was unknown, the war field was what among us the hunting field is.

The rapid growth of learning as well as piety in the three centuries succeeding the conversion of Ireland, prove that the country had not been till then without a preparation for the gift. It had been the special skill of Saint Patrick to build the

good which was lacked upon that which existed. Even the material arts of Ireland he had pressed into the service of the Faith ; and Irish craftsmen had assisted him, not only in the building of his churches, but in casting his church bells, and in the adornment of his chalices, crosiers, and ecclesiastical vestments. Those who have inspected the collections of the Royal Irish Academy, and read the more recent works on Irish Archeology, know how much skill had at an early time been lavished upon the arms, and the dress, the houses and the musical instruments of men whom many figure to themselves as naked wanderers through the woods. That early civilisation had doubtless its special defects as well as merits ; and the vindictiveness which it sanctioned (a vice which even Christian teaching has so often found it difficult to expel), to Ireland as to other countries has proved a frequent cause of suffering and of weakness. Yet that early civilisation was a memorable thing ; and when submitted to the Christian law, it did great things. It sheltered a high virtue at home, and evangelised a great part of Northern Europe ; and amidst many confusions it held its own till the

true time of barbarism had set in—those two disastrous centuries when the Danish invasions trod down the sanctuaries, dispersed the libraries, and laid waste the colleges to which distant Kings had sent their sons.

Perhaps nothing human had so large an influence in the conversion of the Irish, as the personal character of her Apostle. Where others, as Palladius, had failed, he succeeded. By nature, by grace, and by providential training he had been specially fitted for his task. We can still see plainly even the finer traits of that character, while the land of his birth is a matter of dispute, and of his early history we know little, except that he was of noble birth, that he was carried to Ireland by pirates at the age of sixteen, and that after five years of bondage, he escaped thence, to return A.D. 432, when about forty-five years old. We know from himself the great main outlines of his life after his escape. For some years he dwelt at Tours, where, as he tells us, his heart was strengthened by discipline—most needful for the largest hearts—in the school of Saint Martin, his own kinsman, the soldier-priest. Next, he resided for fifteen years

at Auxerres, where his intellect was illumined by the teaching of the great Saint Germanus, both soldier and statesman before he had become a bishop. By his counsel, the Saint, while journeying to Rome, made his abode for some time with Saint Vincent, and his brother Contemplatives at Lerins, then the Thebais of the West. Here he completed his time of preparation, passing beyond, without forgetting, the lowlier 'elements' of the Christian Law, and transmuting to love all that high light which had shone upon him from the Doctrine of Saint Germanus. Thus was ended his triple training, and the work was to begin. At Rome he received mission from Pope Celestine, and Orders also, as some have affirmed, but of this last there seems to be no proof, and there is some evidence to the contrary. This large and various culture had been built on the foundations of a devout childhood, and of a youth ennobled by adversity. It had been bestowed on one of those natures that reward culture. Everywhere we trace the might and the sweetness which belonged to it, the versatile mind yet the simple heart, the varying tact yet the fixed resolve, the large design taking counsel for all, yet

the minute solicitude for each, the fiery zeal yet the genial temper, the skill in using means yet the reliance on God alone, the readiness in action with the willingness to wait, the habitual self-possession yet the outbursts of an inspiration which raised him above himself, the abiding consciousness of authority—an authority in him, but not of him—and yet the ever present humility. Above all, there burned in him that boundless Love, which seems the main constituent of the Apostolic character. It was love for God: but it was love for man also, an impassioned love, and a parental compassion. It was not for the spiritual weal alone of man that he thirsted. Wrong and injustice to the poor he resented as an injury to God. His vehement love for the poor is illustrated by his 'Epistle to Coroticus,' reproaching him with his cruelty, as well as by his denunciations of slavery, which piracy had introduced into parts of Ireland. No wonder that such a character should have exercised a talismanic power over the ardent and sensitive race among whom he laboured, a race, 'easy to be drawn, but impossible to be driven,' and drawn more by sympathy than even by benefits.

The variety of qualities which that character blended in a unity yet more remarkable is illustrated by many of the legends that relate to him: but the inmost of his being, the great interior fountains of power which refreshed his labours, and bore him forward on his conquering way, can only be understood by one who studies, and in a right spirit, that account of his life which he bequeathed to us shortly before its close — the 'Confession of Saint Patrick.' A translation of it is among the translations included in the latest and most detailed history of the Saint. The last poem in this volume embodies its most characteristic portions, including the visions which it records.

The 'Tripartite Life' reveals to us how men felt to Saint Patrick in days not remote from his own. It closes with this summary of his character and labours. 'A just man, indeed, was this man; with purity of nature like the patriarchs; a true pilgrim, like Abraham; gentle and forgiving of heart like Moses; a praiseworthy Psalmist, like David; an emulator of wisdom, like Solomon; a chosen vessel for proclaiming truth, like the Apostle Paul; a

man full of grace, and of the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, like the beloved John; a fair flower-garden to children of grace; a fruitful vine-branch; a flaming fire, with force of life and heat to the sons of Life, for instituting and illustrating charity; a lion in strength and power; a dove in gentleness and humility; a serpent in wisdom and cunning to do good; gentle, humble, merciful towards sons of Life; dark, ungentle towards sons of Death; a servant of labour and service of Christ; a king in dignity and might, for binding and loosening, for liberating and convicting, for killing and giving life.

'After these great miracles, therefore, after resuscitating the dead, after healing lepers, and the blind, and the deaf, and the lame, and all diseases; after ordaining bishops, and priests, and deacons, and people of all orders in the Church; after teaching the men of Erin, and after baptizing them; after founding churches and monasteries; after destroying idols and images and Druidical arts, the hour of death of Saint Patrick approached. He received the body of Christ from the Bishop Tassach, according to the counsel of the Angel Victor. He resigned his spirit afterwards to

Heaven, in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age. His body is still here in the earth, with honour and reverence. Though great his honour here, greater honour will be to him in the Day of Judgment, when judgment will be given on the fruit of his teaching, as of every great Apostle, in the union of the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus; in the union of the Nine Orders of Angels, which cannot be surpassed; in the union of the Divinity and Humanity of the Son of God; in the union, which is higher than all unions, of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.'

Slightly as most men are acquainted with the early legends of Ireland (often attracted more to the stormier period of her annals) it is impossible not to be struck by their wildness, their pathos, their child-like simplicity, and by a significance which must once have rendered them a vehicle of instruction to the people more efficacious than any that is conveyed in a didactic form. They have claims on the philosopher and historian. The incidents which survive in the recollections of a people are not by necessity the most momentous which they have witnessed, but they are the most

characteristic, or they are those with which the popular heart was most in sympathy. The naturalist can reconstruct an extinct species from a few fossil remains :—the philosophic mind might represent to itself the character of a race, from a careful analysis of its legends. Few historical works could give us so true an idea of the Umbrian valleys in the thirteenth century as we can extract from that charming old book of legends, the 'Fioretti di San Francesco,' the record of their favourite Saint. To the imagination those broken fragments suggest a state of society in its wholeness. A history or a disquisition which pretended to treat the same subject with completeness, would probably be, and be felt to be, an imposture. If the Ireland of early times is ever understood, it will not be till after thoughtful men have deemed her legends worthy of their serious attention.

But it is for the lover of poetry that the early Irish legends have most immediate interest. They are poetical because they deal frankly with those vehement emotions of a nation's youth which, like the gestures of children, are cramped by no restraint. They have neither the open nor the veiled coarse-

ness. They delight in illustrating human affections, *in all their forms*, and remind us that an age which can find Love in no poetry except 'love poetry' is a cold-hearted age, and one of narrow sympathies. They have also, like the legendary poetry of most nations, a singular felicity in dealing with the supernatural and the divine. Poetry, like politics, has its 'Religious Difficulty.' In early times the Poet who dealt with themes in part religious was also, like Æschylus, the one who delineated human passion with most energy. In modern times he is apt to leave human interest behind, and finds himself sometimes engaged on a task as difficult as if a Painter were to attempt a picture of the sun, in place of illustrating sunshine flashed from wood and cloud. The opposite course is not happier. If he omits the divine, he degrades and belies the human; for behind the visible there ever remains the invisible, and with it both man and nature have relations strong as those 'of flesh and blood.' The poetry so abundantly found in the old legends never felt this difficulty. Their Religion was neither polemical nor abstruse. They showed Nature as she is *because* they did not fear to 'add the gleam'

that shoots along her summits, and did not cancel all above the line of perpetual snow. Religion was dealt with best by the Poetry that never intended to deal with it at all. It delineated what it saw, but it saw more than surfaces. Even Pagan Poetry owed much of its depth and its greatness to the fact that it never proposed to itself to represent such a mere abstraction as man without man's soul. The Christian nations cherished the Christian legends interwoven with their earliest development, social and national, not with conscious piety, but instinctively, as old Rome cherished those recorded by Livy. They looked back thus 'to the rock whence they were hewn.'

When the Irish legends come to be explored, it will perhaps be found that ancient Ireland, too, had poets who 'left great music to a little clan.' Few indeed are the authentic fragments of Oisìn: but many a tale survives which cannot long remain unknown. One already alluded to, the 'Tain Bo Chuailnè,' has been translated by a great Irish scholar, alas! lost to us, Professor O'Curry; though his translation still remains unpublished. That eminent archeologist, Dr. Reeves, has, it is said,

long been occupied with the far-famed 'Book of Armagh': and there are rumours of an intention on the part of the authorities of Trinity College, Dublin, to publish with a translation the 'Book of Leinster,' which contains poems attributed to Saint Patrick's age, and to yet earlier times. The present volume will be fortunate if it should help to draw attention to Ireland's vast and almost unknown stores of legendary lore. Whenever they are given to us they ought to prove as refreshing as mountain air to men fevered by city life.

May 17, 1872.

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THE BAPTISM OF ST. PATRICK.

'How can the babe baptized be
  Where font is none, and water none?'
Thus wept the nurse on bended knee,
  And swayed the Infant in the sun.

The blind priest took that Infant's hand:
  With that small hand, above the ground
He signed the Cross. At God's command
  A fountain rose with brimming bound.

In that pure wave, from Adam's sin
  The blind priest cleansed the Babe with awe;
Then, reverently, he washed therein
  His old, unseeing face, and saw!

He saw the earth ; he saw the skies,
And that all-wondrous Child decreed
A pagan nation to baptize,
And give the Gentiles light indeed.

Thus Secknall sang. Far off and nigh
The clansmen shouted loud and long ;
While every mother tossed more high
Her babe, and, glorying, joined the song.

THE DISBELIEF OF MILCHO,

OR, SAINT PATRICK'S ONE FAILURE.

WHEN now at Imber Dea, that precious bark,
Freighted with Erin's future, touched the sands
Just where a river, through a woody vale
Curving, with duskier current clave the sea,
Patrick, the Island's great inheritor,
His perilous voyage past, stept forth and knelt
And blessed his God. The peace of those green meads
Cradled 'twixt purple hills and purple deep,
Seemed as the peace of heaven. The sun had set;
But still those summits twinned, the 'Golden Spears,'
Laughed with his latest beam. The hours went by:
The brethren paced the shore, or musing sat,
But still their Patriarch knelt, and still gave thanks
For all the marvellous chances of his life
Since those his earlier years, when, slave new-trapped,
He comforted on hills of Dalaraide

His hungry heart with God, and, cleansed by pain,
In exile found the spirit's native land.
Eve deepened into night, and still he prayed:
The clear cold stars had crowned the azure vault;
And, risen at midnight from dark seas, the moon
Had quenched those stars, yet Patrick still prayed on:
Till from the river murmuring in the vale,
Far off, and from the morning airs close by
That shook the alders by the river's mouth,
And from his own deep heart a voice there came,
'Ere yet thou fling'st God's bounty on this land
There is a debt to cancel. Where is he,
Thy five years' lord that scourged thee for his swine?
Alas that wintry face! Alas that hand
Barren as frozen well! To him reveal it!
To him declare that God who Man became
Man's fall'n estate to raise, as though a man,
All faculties of man unmerged, undimmed,
Had worm become, and died the prey of worms,
That so the mole might see!'
Thus Patrick mused,
Not ignorant that from low beginnings rise
Oftenest the works of greatness; yet of this
Unweeting, that his failure, one and sole
Through all his more than mortal course, even now
Before that low beginning's threshold lay,

And all that Promised Land beyond, a bar
Of seeming scandal stretched. Not otherwise
Might whatsoe'er was mortal in his strength
Dying, put on the immortal.
With the morn
Upon him sleep descended. Waking soon,
A man of might he rose, and in that might
Laboured; and God His servant's labours blessed;
And on that coast the land of Eire to Christ
Her firstfruits paid. Three days his Lord he preached:
The fourth embarking, cape succeeding cape
They passed, and heard the lowing of the herds
In hollow glens, and smelt the balmy breath
Of gorse on golden hillsides; till at eve,
The Imber Domnand reached, on silver sands
Grated their keel. Around them flocked at dawn
Warriors with hunters mixed, and shepherd youths,
And maids with lips as mountain berries red,
And eyes like sloes, or keener eyes, dark-fringed,
And gleaming like the blue-black spear. They came
With milk-pail, and with kid, and kindled fire,
And spread the genial board. Upon that shore
Full many knelt, and gave themselves to Christ—
Strong men, and men at midmost of their hopes
By sickness felled; old chiefs, at life's dim close
That oft had asked, 'Beyond the grave what hope?'

Worn sailors, weary of the toilsome seas,
And craving rest; they, too, that sex which wears
The blended crowns of Chastity and Love,
Wondering, they hailed the Maiden-Motherhood;
And listening children praised the Babe Divine,
And passed Him, each to each.

Ere long, once more
Their sails were spread. Again by grassy marge
They rowed, and sylvan glades. The branching deer
Like flying gleams o'erswept them. Oft the cry
Of fighting clans rang out: but oftener yet
Clamour of rural dance, or mart confused
With many-coloured garb, and movements swift,
Pageant sun-bright: or on the sands a throng
Girdled with circle glad some bard whose song
The concourse shook as tempest shakes the woods.
Still north the wanderers sailed: at evening, mists
Cumbered the shore, and on them leaned the blast,
And flashed fierce rain, mingling with dim-lit sea.
All night they toiled; next day, at noon, they kenned
A seaward stream that shone like golden tress
Severed, and random-thrown. That river's mouth
Ere long attained was all with lilies white
As April field with dāisies. Entering there
They reached a wood, and disembarked with joy.
There, after thanks to God, silent they sat

In thought, and watched the ripples, dusk yet bright,
That lived and died, like things that laugh at time,
On gliding 'neath those many-centuried boughs.
But, midmost, Patrick slept. Then through the trees,
Shy as a fawn half-tamed, now stole, now fled,
A boy of such bright aspect, faëry child
He seemed, or babe exposed of royal race:
At last, assured, beside the Saint he stood,
And dropped into his breast a flower;—then fled:
Thus flower on flower from the great woods he brought,
And hid them in the bosom of the Saint.
The monks forbade him, saying, 'Lest thou wake
The master from his sleep.' But Patrick woke,
And saw the boy, and said, 'Forbid him not;
The heir of all my kingdom is this child.'
Then spake the brethren, 'Wilt thou walk with us?'
And he, 'I will:' and so for his sweet face
They called his name Benignus: and the boy
Thenceforth was Christ's. Beneath his parents' roof
At night they housed. Nowhere that child would sleep
Except at Patrick's feet. Till Patrick's death
Unchanged to him he clave, and after reigned
The second at Ardmacha.

Day by day
Their course they held; ere long the hills of Mourne
Loomed through sea-mist: Ulidian summits next

Before them rose : but nearer at their left,
Inland with westward channel wound the wave,
Changed to sea-lake. Nine miles with chant and hymn
They tracked the gold path of the sinking sun ;
Then, southward, varying with the varying breeze,
Ran up a bay 'twixt headland and green isle,
And landed. Dewy pastures sunset-dazed,
At leisure paced by mild-eyed milk-white kine,
Smiled them a welcome. Onward moved in sight
Swiftly, with shadow far before him cast,
Dichu, that region's lord, a martial man
And merry, and a speaker of the truth.
Pirates he deemed them first, and toward them faced
With wolf-hounds twain that watched their master's eye
To spring, or not to spring. The imperious face
Forbidding not, they sprang : but Patrick raised
His hand, and stone-like crouched they, chained and still :
Then, Dichu onward striding fierce, the Saint
Between them signed the Cross ; and lo, the sword
Froze in his hand ; and Dichu stood like stone.
The amazement past, he prayed the man of God
His house to grace ; and, side by side, a mile
The hills they clomb. Ascending, Patrick turned,
His heart with prescience filled. Beneath, there lay
A gleaming strait ; beyond, a dim vast plain
With many an inlet pierced : a golden marge
Girdled the water-tongues with flag and reed ;

But, far diffused, a gentle sea-mist changed
The fair green flats to purple. 'Night comes on;'
Thus Dichu spake, and waited. Patrick then
Advanced once more, and Sabhall soon was reached,
A castle half, half barn. There garnered lay
Much grain, and sun-imbrowned: and Patrick said,
'Here where the earthly grain was stored for man
The bread of angels man shall eat one day.'
And Patrick loved that place, and Patrick said,
'King Dichu, give thou to the poor that grain,
To Christ, our Lord, thy barn.' The strong man stood
In doubt; but prayers of little orphaned babes
Whom he had saved, went up for him that hour:
Therefore that barn he gave; and unto Christ
By Patrick was baptized. Where lay the corn
A convent later rose. There many a year
Contemplative the Saint abode: and oft
Beneath his sheltering roof the stranger dwelt,
Exile, or kingdom-wearied king, or bard,
That haply blind in age, yet tempest-rocked
By memories of departed glories, drew
With gradual influx into his old heart
Solace of Christian hope.

With Dichu dwelt
Patrick somewhile, intent from him to learn
The inmost of that people. Oft they spake

Of Milcho. 'Once his thrall, against my will,
In earthly things I served him : for his soul
Needs therefore must I labour. Hard was he ;
Unlike those hearts to which the Truth makes way
Like message from a mother in her grave.
Yet what I can I must. Not heaven itself
Can force belief ; for Faith is still good will.'
Loud Dichu laughed : 'Good will ! Milcho's good will !
Neither to others, nor himself, good will
Hath Milcho ! Fireless sits he, winter through,
The logs beside his hearth : and as on them
Glimmers the rime, so glimmers on his face
The smile. Convert him ! Better far to hang him !
Baptize him ! He will film your font with ice !
The cold of Milcho's heart has winter-nipt
That glen he dwells in ! From the sea it slopes
Unfinished, savage, like some nightmare dream,
Raked by an endless east wind of its own.
On wolf's milk was he suckled, not on woman's !
To Milcho speed ! Of Milcho claim belief !
Milcho will shrivel his small eye and say
He scorns to trust himself his father's son,
Nor deems his lands his own by right of race,
But clutched by stress of brain ! Old Milcho's God
Is gold. Forbear him, sir, or ere you seek him
Make smooth your way with gold.'

Thus Dichu spake;
And Patrick, after musings long, replied:
'Faith is no gift that gold begets or feeds,
More oft by gold extinguished. Unto God,
Unbribed, unpurchased, yearns the soul of man;
Yet finds perforce in God his great reward.
Not less this Milcho deems I did him wrong,
His bond-slave fleeing. To requite that loss
Gifts will I send him, first by messengers
Ere yet I see his face.'
Then Patrick sent
His messengers to Milcho, speaking thus:
'If ill befell thy herds through flight of mine
Fourfold that loss requite I, lest for hate
Of me, my Master's Word thou disesteem.
Likewise I sue thy friendship; and I come
In few days' space, with gift of other gold
Than earth conceals, the Tidings of that God
Who made all worlds, and late His Face hath shown,
Sun-like to man. But thou, rejoice in hope!'

Thus Patrick, once by man advised in part,
Though wont to counsel with his God alone.

Meantime full many a rumour vague had vexed
Milcho much musing. Dealings large had he,

And distant. Died a chief? He sent and bought
The widow's all; or sold on foodless shores
For usury the leanest of his kine.
Therefore his dark ships and the populous quays
With news still murmured. First from Imber Dea
Came whispers how a sage had landed late,
And how when Nathi fain had barred his way,
Nathi that spurned Palladius from the land,
That sage with levelled eyes, and kingly front
Had from his presence driven him with a ban
Cur-like and craven; and how on bended knee
Sinell believed, the royal man well-loved
Descending from the judgment-seat with joy:
And how when fishermen his brethren's quest
For food had spurned, that sage had raised his rod,
And all the silver harvest of the stream
Lay black in broken nets and sand. His wrinkled brow
Wrinkling yet more, thus Milcho answer made:
'Deceived are those that will to be deceived:
This knave has heard of gold in river-beds,
And comes, a deft sand-groper; let him come!
Ten years he'll toil ere gold enough he finds
To make a crooked torque.'
From Tara next
The news: 'Laeghaire, the King, in sullen cloud
Sits close, or storm-like raves from court to court,

Because the chiefest of the Druid race
Locru, and Luchat, prophesied long since
That one day from the sea a Priest would come
With doctrine and a rite, and hurl to earth
Idols, and sceptred monarchs from their thrones;
And lo! At Imber Boindi late there stept
A Priest from roaring waves with creed and rite,
And men before him bow.' Then Milcho spake:
'Not flesh enough from thy strong bones, Laeghaire,
These Druids, ravens of the woods, have plucked,
But they must pluck thine eyes! Ah priestly race,
I loathe ye! 'Twixt the People and their King
A new sore ye would rub!' Last came a voice:
'This day in Eire thy saying is fulfilled,
Conn of the "Hundred Battles," from thy throne
Leaping long since, and crying, "O'er the sea
The Prophet cometh, princes in his train,
Bearing for regal sceptres bended staffs,
Which from the land's high places, cliff and peak,
Shall drag the fair flowers down!"' Scoffing he heard;
'Conn of the "Hundred Battles"! Had he sent
His nation-quelling hordes to yonder steep
And rolled its boulders down, and built a mole
To fence my laden ships from spring-tide surge,
Far kinglier pattern had he shown, and given
More solace to the land.'

He rose and turned
With sideway leer; and printing with vague step
Irregular the shining sands, on strode
Toward his cold home, alone; and saw by chance
A little bird light-perched, that, being sick,
Plucked from the fissured sea-cliff grains of sand;
And, noting, said, 'O bird, when beak of thine
From base to crown this huge cliff hath devoured
Then shall that man of creed and rite make null
The strong rock of my will!' Thus Milcho spake,
Feigning the peace not his.

Next day it chanced
Women he heard in converse. Thus the first:
'If true the news, good speed for him, my boy!
Poor slaves by Milcho scourged on earth shall wear
One day a monarch's crown! Good speed for her
His little sister, not reserved like us
Under these loads to bend.' To whom her mate:
'Doubt not the prophet's tidings! Not in vain
The Power Unknown hath made us! Come He must,
Or send, and help His people on their way.'
They passed, and Milcho said, 'Through hate of me
All men believe!' And straightway Milcho's face
Grew bleaker than that crab-tree stem forlorn
That hid him, wanner than sea-sand that, wet,
Whitens around the foot down-pressed.

Time passed:

One morn in bitter mockery Milcho mused :
'What better laughter than when thief from thief
Pilfers the pilfered goods? Our Druid thief
Two thousand years hath milked and shorn this land;
Now comes the thief outlandish that with him
Milk-pail and fleece would share! O Bacrach old,
To hear thee shout "Impostor!"' Straight he went
To Bacrach's cell, hid in a skirt wind-shav'n
Of low-grown wood, and met, departing thence,
Three sailors recent from a ship late-beached.
Within a corner huddled, on the floor,
The Druid sat, cowering, and cold, and mazed :
Sudden he rose, and cried, with conquering joy
Clothed as with youth restored : 'The God Unknown,
That God who all things made, hath walked the earth!
This hour His Prophet treads the isle! Three men
Have seen him; and their speech is true. To them
That Prophet spake : "Four hundred years ago,
Sinless God's Son on earth for sinners died :
Black grew the world, and graves gave up their dead."
Thus spake the Seer. Four hundred years ago!
Mark well the time! Of Ulster's Druid race
What man but yearly, those four hundred years,
Trembled that tale recounting which with this
Tallies as footprint with the foot of man?
Four hundred years ago—that self-same day—

Connor, the son of Nessa, Ulster's King,
Sat throned, his people judging. As he sat,
Under clear skies, behold, o'er all the earth
Swept a great shadow from the windless east;
And darkness hung upon the air three hours;
Dead fell the birds, and beasts astonished fled.
Then to his Chief of Druids, Connor spake
Whispering; and he, his oracles searched out,
Shivering made answer, "From a land accursed,
O King, that shadow sweeps; therein, this hour,
By sinful men sinless God's Son is slain."
Then Ulster's king, down-dashing sceptre and crown,
Rose, clamouring, "Sinless! shall the sinless die?"
And madness fell on him; and down that steep
He rushed whereon the Emanian Palace stood,
And reached the grove, Lambraidhè, with two swords,
The sword of battle, and the sword of state,
And hewed and hewed, crying "Were I but there
Thus they should fall that Sinless One who slay;"
And in that madness died. The men of Eire
This thing beheld; nor ever in the land
Hath ceased the rumour, nor the tear for him
Who, wroth at justice trampled, martyr died.
And now we know that not for any dream
He died, but for the Truth: and whensoe'er
The Prophet of that Son of God who died

Sinless for sinners, standeth in this place,
I, Bacrach, oldest Druid in this Isle,
Will rise the first, and kiss his vesture's hem.'

He spake ; and Milcho heard, and without speech
Departed from that house.

A later day
When the cold March sunset, gone almost ere come,
By glacial shower was hustled out of life,
Under a blighted ash tree, near his house,
Thus mused the man : 'Believe, or Disbelieve !
The will does both ! Then idiot who would be
For profitless belief to sell himself?
Yet disbelief not less might work our bane !
For, I remember, once a sickly slave
Ill shepherded my flock : I spake him plain ;
" When next, through fault of thine, the midnight wolf
Worries a sheep, on yonder tree you hang : "
The blear-eyed idiot looked into my face,
And smiled his disbelief. On that day week
Two lambs lay dead. I hanged him on a tree.
What tree? this tree ! Why, this is passing strange !
For, three nights since, I saw him in a dream :
Weakling as wont he stood beside my bed,
And, clutching at his wrenched and livid throat,
Spake thus, " Belief is safest."'

Ceased the hail
To rattle on the ever barren boughs,
And friendlier sound was heard. Beside his door
Wayworn the messengers of Patrick stood,
And showed the gifts, and held his letter forth.
Then learned that lost one all the truth. That sage
By miracles confessed, that prophet vouched
By warnings old, that seer, by words of might
Subduing all things to himself—that priest,
None other was than the uncomplaining slave
Five years by him afflicted! In him rage
Burst forth, with fear commixed, as when a beast
Strains in the toils. 'Can I alone stand firm?'
He mused; and then, 'Shall I, in mine old age
Byeword become—the vassal of my slave?
Shall I not rather drive him from my door
With wolf hounds and a curse?' As thus he stood
The gifts he marked, and bade men bear them in,
And homeward sent the messengers unfed.

But Milcho slept not all that night for thought,
And, forth ere sunrise issuing, paced a moor
Stone-roughened like the grave-yard of dead hosts,
Till noontide. Sudden then he stopt, and thus
Discoursed within; 'A plot from first to last,
The fraudulent bondage, flight, and late return!

For now I mind me of a foolish dream
Chance-sent, yet drawn by him awry. One night
Methought from rainy hills into my hall
Entered that boy, all fire. From hands and head,
From hair and mouth, forth rushed a flaming fire
White, like white light, and still the mighty flame
Into itself took all. With hands outstretched
I spurned it. On my cradled daughters twain
It turned, and they were ashes. Then in burst
The south wind through the portals of the house,
Tempest rose-sweet, and blew those ashes forth
Wide as the realm. At dawn I sent, and thus
That knave my vision glossed. "That fire is Faith—
Faith in the God Triune, the God made Man,
Sole light wherein I walk, and walking burn;
And they that walk with me shall burn like me
By Faith. But thou that radiance wilt repel,
Housed through ill-will, in Error's endless night.
Not less thy little daughters shall believe
With glory and great joy: and, when they die,
Report of them, like ashes blown abroad,
Shall light far lands, and health to men of Faith
Stream from their dust." I drave the impostor forth:
Perjured ere long he fled, and now returns
To reap the air-sown harvest of a dream'—
Thus mused he, while black shadow swept the moor.

' So day by day darker was Milcho's heart,
Till, with the endless brooding on one thought,
Began a little flaw within that brain
For solid strength his boast. Was no friend nigh?
Alas! what friend had he? All men he scorned;
None truly knew. In each, the best and sweetest
Near him had ever pined, like stunted growth
By breath of glacier dwarfed. The fifth day dawned;
And inly thus he muttered, darkly pale.
' Five days:—in three the messengers returned:
In three—in two—the Accursèd will be here,
Or blacken yonder Sleemish with his crew
Descending. Then those idiots, kerne and slave,
(The mighty flame into itself takes all)
Full swarm will fly to meet him! Fool! fool! fool!
The man hath snared me with those gifts he sent;
Else had I barred the mountains:—now too late,
My people in revolt. Whole weeks that horde
Will throng my courts, demanding board and bed,
With hosts by Dichu sent my pang to flout,
And sorer make my charge. My granaries sacked,
My larder lean as ship for six months starved,
The man I hate will rise, and open shake
The invincible banner of his mad new Faith,
Till all that hear him shout, like winds or waves,
Belief, and I be left sole recusant;

Or else perhaps that Fury who prevails
At times o'er knee-joints of reluctant men,
By magic imped, may crumble into dust
By force my disbelief.'
His head he raised,
And lo, before him lay the sea, far ebbed,
Sad with a sunset all but gone: the reeds
Sighed in the wind, and sighed a sweeter voice
Oft heard in childhood—now the last time heard:
'Believe!' it whispered. Vain the voice! That hour,
Stirred from the abyss, the sins of all his life
Around him rose like night—not one, but all—
That earliest sin which, like a dagger, pierced
His mother's heart; that worst, when summer drouth
Parched the brown vales, and infants thirsting died,
While from full pail he gorged his swine with milk,
And flung the rest away. Sin-walled he stood:
God's Angels could not pierce that cincture dread,
Nor he look through it. Yet he dreamed he saw.
His life he saw; its labours, and its gains;
The manifold conquests of a Will oft tried;
Victory, Defeat, Retrieval:—last, that scene
Around him spread; the wan sea and grey rocks;
And now well knew he that on that same ledge
He, Milcho, thirty years gone by, had stood,
While pirates pushed to sea, upon that shore

Leaving their spoil—a scared and weeping boy,
(His price two yearling kids and half a sheep)
Thenceforth his slave.
Not sole he mused that hour.
The Demon of his House beside him stood
Upon that iron coast, and whispered thus;—
'Masterful man art thou for wit and strength;
Yet girl-like standst thou brooding! Weave a snare!
For gold he comes—this prophet—All thou hast
Heap in thy house; then fire it! In far lands
Make thee new fortunes. Frustrate thus shall he
On ruins stare, his destined vassal scaped.'

So fell the whisper; and as one who hears
And does, the stiff-necked man obsequious bent
His strong will to a stronger, and returned,
And gave command, from barn and anchored ship
His stored up wealth, yea, all things that were his,
To heap within his castle. It was done.
Then filled he his huge hall with resinous beams
Seasoned for far sea-voyage, and the ribs
Of ocean-cleaving vessels deep in sea;
Which ended, to his topmost tower he clomb,
And therein sat two days, with face to south,
Clutching a brand; and oft through clenched teeth
Hissed out, "Because I will to disbelieve.'

But ere the second sunset two brief hours,
Where comfortless leaned forth that western ridge
Long patched with whiteness by half melted snows,
There crept a gradual shadow. Soon the man
Discerned its import. There they hung—he saw them—
That company detested; hung as when
Storm-boding cloud on mountain hangs half way
Scarce moving, and in fear the shepherd cries,
'Would that the worst were come!' So dread to him
Those Heralds of fair Peace! He gazed upon them,
With blood-shot eyes: then in a moment stood
Sole in his never festal hall, and flung
His lighted brand into that pile far forth,
And issuing faced the circle of his serfs
That, wondering, gathered round in thickening mass,
Eyeing that unloved House.
His place he chose
Beside that blighted ash, fronting those towers
Palled with red smoke, and muttered low, 'So be it!
Worse to be vassal to the man I hate,'
With hueless lips. His whole white face that hour
Was scorched; and blistered was the dead tree's bark;
Yet there he stood; and in that fiery light
His life, no more triumphant, passed once more
In underthought before him, while on spread
The swift, contagious madness of that fire,

And muttered thus, not knowing it, the man,
'The mighty flame into itself takes all,'
Mechanic iteration. Not alone
Stood he that hour. The Demon of his House
By him once more and closer than of old,
Stood, whispering thus, 'Thy game is now played out;
Henceforth a byeword art thou—rich in youth—
Self-beggared in old age.' And as the wind
Of that shrill whisper cut his listening soul,
The blazing roof fell in on all his wealth,
And, loud as laughter from ten thousand fiends,
Up rushed the fire. With arms outstretched he stood;
Stood firm; then forward with a wild beast's cry
He dashed himself into that raging flame,
And vanished as a leaf.

Upon a spur
Of Sleemish, eastward on its northern slope,
Stood Patrick and his Brethren, travel-worn,
When distant o'er the brown and billowy moor
Rose the white smoke, that changed ere long to flame,
From site unknown; for by the seaward crest
That keep lay hidden. Hands to forehead raised,
Wondering they watched it. One to other spake;
'The huge Dalriad forest is afire
Ere melted winter's snows!' Another thus,
'In vengeance o'er the ocean Creithe or Pict,
Favoured by magic, or by mist, have crossed,

And fired old Milcho's ships.' But Patrick leaned
Upon his crosier, pale as the ashes wan
Left by a burned out city. Long he stood
Silent, till, sudden, fiercelier soared the flame
Reddening the edges of a cloud low hung:
And, after pause, vibration slow and stern,
Troubling the burthened bosom of the air,
Upon a long surge of the northern wind
Came up, a murmur as of wintry seas
Far borne at night. All heard that sound; all felt it;
One only knew its import. Patrick turned—
'The deed is done: the man I would have saved
Is dead; because he willed to disbelieve.'

Yet Patrick grieved for Milcho, nor that hour
Passed further north. Three days on Sleemish hill
He dwelt in prayer. To Tara's royal halls
Then turned he, and the Royal House and Host
Subdued to Christ, save Erin's King, Laeghaire.

And Milcho's daughters twain to Christ were born
In Baptism, and each Emeria named:
Like rose-trees in the garden of the Lord
Grew they and flourished. Dying young, one grave
Received them at Cluainbrain. Healing thence
To many from their relics past; to more
The spirit's happier healing, Love and Faith.

SAINT PATRICK AT TARA.

THE King is wroth with a greater wrath
  Than the wrath of Nial or the wrath of Conn!
From his heart to his brow the blood makes path,
  And hangs there, a red cloud, beneath his crown.

Is there any who knows not, from south to north,
  That Laeghaire to-morrow his birthday keeps?
No fire may be lit upon hill or hearth
Till the King's strong fire in its kingly mirth
  Up rushes from Tara's palace steeps!

Yet Patrick has lighted his Paschal fire
  At Slane—it is holy Saturday—
And bless'd his font 'mid the chaunting choir!
  From hill to hill the flame makes way.
While the King looks on it his eyes with ire
  Flash red, like Mars, under tresses grey.

The great King's captains with drawn swords rose:
To avenge their Lord and the State they swore;
The Druids rose and their garments tore;
'The strangers to us and our Gods are foes!'
Then the King to Patrick a herald sent,
Who said, 'Come up at noon, and show
Who lit thy fire, and with what intent?
These things the great King Laeghaire would know.'

But Laeghaire had hid twelve men by the way,
Who swore by the sun the Saint to slay.

When the waters of Boyne began to bask
And fields to flash in the rising sun
The Apostle Evangelist kept his Pasch,
And Erin her grace baptismal won:
Her birthday it was: his font the rock,
He bless'd the land, and he bless'd his flock.

Then forth to Tara he fared full lowly:
The Staff of Jesus was in his hand:
Twelve priests paced after him chaunting slowly,
Printing their steps on the dewy land.
It was the Resurrection morn;
The lark sang loud o'er the springing corn;
The dove was heard, and the hunter's horn.

The murderers stood close by on the way ;
Yet they saw nought save the lambs at play.

A trouble lurk'd in the King's strong eye
When the guest he counted for dead drew nigh.
He sate in state at his palace gate ;
His chiefs and nobles were ranged around ;
The Druids like ravens smelt some far fate ;
Their eyes were gloomily bent on the ground.
Then spake Laeghaire : ' He comes—beware !
' Let none salute him, or rise from his chair ! '

Like some still vision men see by night,
Mitred, with eyes of serene command,
Saint Patrick moved onward in ghostly white :
The Staff of Jesus was in his hand.
His priests paced after him unafraid,
And the boy, Benignus, more like a maid ;
Like a maid just wedded he walked and smiled,
To Christ new plighted, that priestly child.

They enter'd the circle ; their hymn they ceased ;
The Druids their eyes bent earthward still :
On Patrick's brow the glory increased,
As a sunrise brightening some breathless hill.
The warriors sat silent : strange awe they felt :
The chief bard, Dubtach, rose and knelt !

Then Patrick discoursed of the things to be
When time gives way to eternity,
Of kingdoms that fall, which are dreams not things,
And the Kingdom built by the King of kings.
Of Him he spake who reigns from the Cross;
Of the death which is life, and the life which is loss;
How all things were made by the Infant Lord,
And the small hand the Magian kings adored.
His voice sounded on like a throbbing flood
That swells all night from some far-off wood,
And when it was ended—that wondrous strain—
Invisible myriads breathed 'Amen!'

While he spake, men say that the refluent tide
On the shore by Colpa ceased to sink;
They say the white deer by Mulla's side
O'er the green marge bending forbore to drink:
That the Brandon eagle forgat to soar;
That no leaf stirr'd in the wood by Lee.
Such stupor hung the island o'er,
For none might guess what the end would be.

Then whisper'd the King to a chief close by,
'It were better for me to believe than die!'

Yet the King believed not; but ordinance gave
That whoso would might believe that word:

So the meek believed, and the wise, and brave,
And Mary's Son as their God adored.
And the Druids, because they could answer nought,
Bow'd down to the Faith the stranger brought.
That day upon Erin God pour'd His Spirit—
Yet none like the chief of the Bards had merit,
Dubtach !—He rose and believed the first,
Eré the great light yet on the rest had burst.

THE STRIVING OF SAINT PATRICK ON MOUNT CRUACHAN.

A YEAR and more had Patrick trod the Isle;
And evermore God's work beneath his hand,
Since God had blessed that hand, ran out full-sphered,
And brighter than a new-created star.
The Island race, in feud of clan with clan
Barbaric, gracious else, and high of heart,
Nor worshippers of self, nor dulled through sense,
Beholding, not alone his wondrous works,
But, wondrous more, the sweetness of his strength,
And how he neither shrank from flood nor fire,
And how he couched him on the wintry rocks,
And how he sang great hymns to One who heard,
And how he cared for poor men and the sick,
And for the souls invisible of men,
To him made way—not simple hinds alone,
But chiefly wisest heads (for wisdom then
Prime wisdom saw in Faith); and, mixt with these,
Chieftains and sceptred kings. Nigh Tara, first,

Scorning the King's command, had Patrick lit
His Paschal fire, and heavenward as it soared,
The royal fire, and all the Beltaine fires,
Shamed by its beam, had withered round the Isle
Like fires on little hearths, whereon the sun
Looks in his greatness. Later, to that plain,
Central 'mid Eire, 'of Adoration' named,
Down-trampled for two thousand years and more
By erring feet, in Apostolic might
The Saint had sped, and from the river kenned,
Ill-pleased, the nation's idol lifting high
His head, and those twelve vassal gods around,
All mailed in gold and shining as the sun,
A pomp impure. Ill-pleased the Saint had seen them,
And raised the Staff of Jesus with a ban:
Then He, that demon, named of men Crom-dubh,
With all his vassal gods, into the earth
That knew her Maker, to their necks had sunk,
While round the island rang three times the cry
Of fiends tormented.

Not for this as yet
His strength had Patrick perfected: as yet
The depths he had not trodden; nor had God
Drawn forth His total forces in the man
Hidden long since and sealed. For this cause he,
Who still his own heart in triumphant hour

Suspected most, fearing lest spleen of pride,
Or aim not singly Godward, mar God's work,
And likewise from his handling of the Gael,
Knowing not less their weakness than their strength,
Paused on his conquering way, and lonely sat
In cloud of thought. His second Lent had come:
Its first three days went by; the fourth he rose,
And meeting his disciples that drew nigh
Vouchsafed this greeting only, 'Bide ye here
Till I return,' and straightway set his face
Alone to that great hill 'of eagles' named,
Huge Cruachan, that o'er the western deep
Hung through sea-mist, with shadowing crag on crag,
High-ridged, and endless forest long since dead.

That forest reached, the angel of the Lord
Beside him, as he entered, stood and spake:
'The gifts thy soul demands, demand them not;
For they are mighty and immeasurable,
And over great for granting.' And the Saint,
'This mountain Cruachan I will not leave
Alive till all be granted, to the last.'

Then knelt he on the clouded mountain's base,
And was in prayer; and, wrestling with the Lord,
Demanded wondrous things immeasurable,

Not easy to be granted, for the land ;
Nor brooked repulse ; and when repulse there came,
Repulse that quells the weak and crowns the strong,
Forth from its gloom like lightning on him flashed
Intelligential gleam and insight winged
That plainlier showed him all his people's heart,
And all the wound thereof : and as in depth
Knowledge descended, so in height his prayer
Rose, and far spread ; nor roused alone those Powers
Regioned with God ; for as the strength of fire,
When flames some palace pile, or city vast,
Wakens a tempest round it, dragging in
Wild blast, and from the aggression mightier grows,
So wakened Patrick's prayer the demon race,
And drew their legions in upon his soul
From near and far. First came the Accursed encamped
On Connact's cloudy hills and watery moors ;
Old Umbhall's Heads, Iorras, and Arran Isle,
And where Tyrawley clasps that sea-girt wood
Fochlut, whence earlier rang the children's cry
To demons' trump of doom. In stormy rack
They came, and hung above the invested mount
Expectant. But, their mutterings heeding not,
When Patrick still in puissance rose of prayer,
O'er all their armies prescience ran of fate,
Around the realm dispersed ; and, north and south,
From all the mountain-girdled coasts) for still

Best site attracts worst Spirit) on they came,
From Aileach's shore and Uladh's hoary cliffs,
Which held the aeries of that eagle race
More late in Alba throned, 'Lords of the Isles,'
High chiefs whose bards, in strong transmitted line,
Filled with the name of Fionn, and thine, Oisìn,
The blue glens of that never-vanquished land.
From those purpureal mountains that o'ergaze
Rock-bowered Loch Lene broidered with sanguine bead,
They came, and many a ridge o'er sea-lake stretched
That, autumn-robed in purple and in gold,
Pontific vestment, still the memories guard
Of monks who reared thereon their mystic cells,
Finian and Kieran, Fiacre and Enda—him
Of hermits sire, and that sea-facing Saint
Brendan, who, in his wicker boat of skins,
Before the Genoese a thousand years,
Found a new world; and many more that now,
Under wind-wasted Cross of Clonmacnoise
Await the day of Christ.
So rushed they on
From all sides, and, close met, in circling storm
Besieged the enclouded steep of Cruachan,
That scarce the difference knew 'twixt night and day
More than the sunless pole. Him sought they, him
Whom infinitely near they might approach,

Not touch, while firm his faith—their Foe that dragg'd
With both hands forth their realm's foundation stone,
Sole-kneeling on that wood-girt mountain's base.
Thus ruin filled the mountain : day by day
The forest torment deepened ; louder roared
The great aisles of the devastated woods ;
Black cave replied to cave ; and oaks, whole ranks,
Colossal growth of immemorial years,
Sown ere Milesius landed, or that race
He vanquished, or that earliest Scythian tribe,
Fell in long line, like deep-mined castle wall,
At either side God's warrior. Slowly died
At last, far echoed in remote ravine,
The thunder : then crept forth a little voice
That shrilly whisper'd to him thus in scorn ;
'Two thousand years yon race hath walked in blood
Neck-deep ; and shall it serve thy Lord of Peace?'
That whisper ceased. Again from all sides burst
Tenfold the storm ; and as it waxed, the Saint
Waxed in strong heart; and, kneeling with stretched hands,
Made for himself a panoply of prayer,
And bound it round his bosom twice and thrice,
And made a sword of comminating psalm,
And smote at them that mocked him. Day by day,
Till now the second Sunday's vesper bell
Gladdened the little churches round the isle,

That conflict raged: then, maddening in their ire,
Sudden the Princedoms of the dark, that rode
This way and that way through the tempest, brake
Their sceptres, and with one great cry it fell:
At once o'er all was silence: sunset lit
The world, that shone as though with face upturned
It gazed on heavens by angel faces thronged,
And answered light with light. A single bird
Carolled; and from the forest skirt down fell,
Gem-like, the last drops of the exhausted storm.

Then bowed the Saint his forehead to the ground
Thanking his God; and there in sacred trance,
Which was not sleep, abode, not hours alone,
But silent nights and days; and, 'mid that trance,
God fed his heart with unseen Sacraments,
Immortal food. Awaking, Patrick felt
Yearnings for nearer commune with his God,
Though great its cost; and gat him on his feet,
And, mile by mile, ascended through the woods
Till stunted were its growths; and still he clomb,
Printing with sandall'd foot the dewy steep:
But when above the mountain rose the moon,
Brightening each mist, while sank in double night
The prone morass, he came upon a stone
Tomb-shaped, that flecked the steep: a little stream

Dropp'd by it from the summits to the woods:
Thereon he knelt; and was once more in prayer.

Nor prayed unnoticed by that race abhorred.
No sooner had his knees the mountain touched
Than through their realm vibration went; and straight
His prayer detecting, back they trooped in clouds,
And o'er him closed, blotting with bat-like wing
And inky pall, the moon. Then thunder pealed
Once more, nor ceased from pealing. Over all
Night ruled, except when blue and forkèd flash
Revealed the on-circling waterspout, or plunge
Of rain beneath the blown cloud's ravell'd hem,
Or, huge on high, that lion-coloured steep
Which, like a lion, roared into the night,
Answering the roaring from sea-caves far down.
Dire was the strife. That hour the Mountain old,
An anarch throned 'mid ruins, flung himself
In madness forth on all his winds and floods,
An omnipresent wrath! For God reserved,
Too long the prey of demons he had been;
Possession foul and fell. Now nigh expelled
Those demons rent their victim freed. Aloft,
They burst the rocky barrier of the tarn
That downward dashed its countless cataracts,
Drowning far vales. On either side the Saint,

A torrent rushed—mightiest of all these twain—
Peeling the softer substance from the hills,
Their flesh, till glared, deep-trenched, the mountain's bones ;
And as those torrents widened, rocks down rolled,
Showering upon that unsubverted head
Their spray ice-cold. Before him closed the flood,
And closed behind, till all was raging flood,
All but that tomb-like stone whereon he knelt.

Unshaken there he knelt with hands outstretched,
God's Athlete ! For a mighty prizé he strove ;
Nor slacked, nor any whit his forehead bowed :
Fixed was his eye and keen ; the whole pale face
Keen as that eye itself, though, shapeless yet,
The infernal horde to ear not eye addressed
Their battle. Back he drave them, rank on rank,
Routed, with psalm, and malison, and ban,
As from a sling flung forth. Revolt's blind spawn
He named them ; one time Spirits, now linked with brute,
Yea, bestial more and baser ; and as a ship
Mounts with the mounting of the wave, so he
O'er all the insurgent tempest of their wrath
Rode on triumphant. Days went by, and nights ;
Then came a lull ; and lo ! a whisper shrill,
Once heard before, again its poison cold

Distilled; 'Albeit to Christ this land should bow,
Some conqueror's foot one day her faith would quell.'
It ceased. Tenfold once more the storm burst forth:
Once more the ecstatic passion of his prayer
Met it, and, breasting, overbore, until
Sudden the Princedoms of the night that rode
This way and that way through the whirlwind, dashed
Their vanquished crowns of darkness to the ground
With one long cry. Then silence came; and lo!
The white dawn of the fourth fair Saturday
O'erflowed the world. Slowly the Saint upraised
His weary eyes. Upon the mountain lawns
Lay happy lights; and birds sang; and a stream
That any five-years' child might overleap,
Beside him lapsed crystalline between banks
With violets all empurpled, and smooth marge
Green as that spray which earliest sucks the spring.

Then Patrick raised to God his orison
On that fair mount, and planted in the grass
His crosier staff, and slept; and in his sleep
God fed his heart with unseen sacraments,
Manna of might divine. Three days he slept;
The fourth he woke. Upon his heart there rushed
Yearning for closer converse with his God
Though great the cost; and on his feet he gat

And high, and higher yet, that mountain scaled,
And reached at noon the summit. Far below
Basking the island lay, through rainbow shower
Gleaming in part, and shadowy moor, and ridge
Blue in the distance looming. Westward stretched
Infinite sea, with sacred light ablaze,
And high o'er head there hung a cloudless heaven.

Upon that summit kneeling, face to sea
The Saint, with hands held forth and thanks returned,
Claimed as his stately heritage that realm
From north to south: but instant as his lip
Printed with earliest pulse of Christian prayer
That clear aërial clime, Pagan till then,
The Host Accursed, sagacious of his act,
Rushed back from all the isle, and round him met
With anger seven times heated, since their hour
(And this they knew) was come. Nor thunder din,
And challenge through the ear alone, sufficed
That hour their rage malign that, craving sore
Material bulk, his bulk to rend—their foe's—
Through fleshly strength of that their murder-lust
Flamed forth in visual form, phantoms night-black,
Though bodiless, yet to bodied mass as nigh
As Spirits can reach. More thick than vultures winged
To fields with carnage strewn, the Accursèd thronged,

Making thick night which neither earth nor sky
Could pierce, from sense expunged. In phalanx now,
Anon in breaking legion, or in globe,
With clang of iron pinion on they rushed
And spectral dart high-held. Nor quailed the Saint,
Contending for his people on that mount,
Nor spared God's foes; for as old minster towers,
Besieged by midnight storm, send forth reply
In storm outrolled of bells, so sent he forth
Defiance from fierce lip, vindictive chaunt,
And blight and ban, and maledictive rite
Potent on face of Spirits impure to raise
These plague-spots three, Madness, Defeat, Despair;
Nor stinted flail of taunt—'When first your coasts
My pinnace neared, as now upon the hills,
Hung ye in cloud; as now, this Cross I raised;
Ye fled before it, and again shall fly!'
So hurled he back their squadrons. Day by day
The hurricanes of war that mountain dinned:
Till now, on Holy Saturday, that hour
Returned which maketh glad the Church of God,
When over Christendom in widowed fanes
Two days by penance stripped, and dumb, as though
Some Antichrist had trodd'n them down, once more
Swells forth amid the new-lit paschal lights
The 'Gloria in Excelsis:' sudden then
Ceased that great conflict, all save one low voice,

Twice heard before, now edged with bitterer scoff,
'That race thou lov'st, though fierce in wrath, is soft:
Plenty and peace will melt their faith one day:'
Then with that whisper dying, died the night:
Then forth from darkness issued earth and sky:
Then fled the phantoms far o'er ocean's wave,
Thence to return not till the day of doom.

But he, their conqueror wept, upon that height
Standing; nor of his victory had he joy,
Nor of that jubilant Isle to light restored,
Nor of that heaven relit; so worked that scoff
Winged from the abyss; and ever thus the man
With darkness communed, and that poison cold:
'If Faith indeed should flood the land with peace,
And peace with gold, and gold the people's heart
Corrupt, till Faith one day, through Faith's reward
Or die or live diseased, the shame of Faith,
Then blacker were this land and more accursed
Than lands that knew no Christ.' And musing thus
The whole heart of the man was turned to tears,
A fount of bale, and chalice brimmed with death,
(For oft a barren thought more racks than truth
Proven and sure;) and, weeping, still he wept
Till drenched was all his sad monastic cowl
As sea-weed on the dripping shelf storm-cast
Latest, and tremulous still.

As thus he wept
Suddenly, beside him on that summit broad,
Ran out a golden beam, like sunset path
Gilding the sea: and, turning, by his side,
Victor, God's angel, stood with lustrous brow
Fresh from that Face no man can see and live.
He, putting forth his hand, with living coal
Snatched from God's altar, straight that dripping cowl
Made dry as Autumn sheaf. The angel spake;
'Rejoice, for fled are they that hate thy land,
And those are nigh that love it.' Then the Saint
His head upraised; and lo! in snowy sheen
Cresting high rock, and ridge, and airy peak,
Innumerable the Sons of God all round
Vested the invisible mountain with white light,
As when the foam-white birds of ocean throng
Sea-rock so close that none that rock may ken.
In trance the Living Creatures stood, with wings
That pointing crossed upon their breasts; nor seemed
As new arrived, but native to that site,
Though veiled till now from mortal vision. Song
They sang to soothe the vexed heart of the Saint—
Love-song of Heaven: and slowly as it died
Their splendours waned; and through that vanishing light
Earth, sea, and heaven returned.

To Patrick then,

Thus Victor spake, 'Depart from Cruachan,
Since God hath given thee wondrous gifts, immense.'
And Patrick, 'Till the last of all my prayers
Be granted, I depart not though I die.
One said, "Too fierce that race to bend to faith."'
Then spake God's angel, mild of voice, and kind:
'Not all are fierce that fiercest seem, for oft
Fierceness is blindfold love, or love ajar.
Souls thou wouldst have: for every hair late wet
In this thy tearful cowl, and habit drenched,
God gives thee myriads seven of Souls, from sin
Redeemed, and doom; and Souls, beside, as many
As o'er yon deep in legioned flight might hang
Far as thine eye can see. But get thee down
From Cruachan, for mighty is thy prayer.'
And Patrick answer made, 'Not great thy boon!
Watch have I kept, and wearied are mine eyes,
And dim; nor see they far o'er yonder deep.'
And Victor, 'Have thou Souls from land to land
In cloud full-stretched; but get thee down: this Mount
God's Altar is, and puissance adds to prayer.'
And Patrick, 'On this mountain wept have I;
And therefore giftless will I not depart:
One said, "Although that people should believe
Yet conqueror's heel one day their faith would quell."'
To whom the angel, mild of voice, and kind:

'Conquerors are they that subjugate the soul :
This also God concedes thee ; conquering foe
Trampling this land, shall tread not out her Faith
Nor sap by fraud, so long as thou in heaven
Look'st on God's face ; nay, by that Faith subdued,
That foe shall serve and live. But get thee down
And worship in the vale.' Then Patrick said,
'Live they that list ! Full sorely wept have I,
Nor will I hence depart unsatisfied :
One said, "Grown soft, that race their Faith will shame ;"
Say therefore what the Lord thy God will grant,
Nor stint His hand ; since never scanter grace
Fell yet on head of nation-taming man
Than thou to me hast portioned till this hour.'

Then answer made the angel, soft of voice :
'Not all men stumble when a Nation falls ;
There are that upright stand. God gives thee this :
They that are faithful to thy Faith, that walk
Thy way, and keep thy covenant with God,
And daily sing thy hymn, when cometh the Judge
With Sign blood-red facing Jehosaphat,
And fear lays prone the many-mountained world,
The same shall scape the doom.' And Patrick said,
'That hymn is long, and hard for simple folk,
And hard for children.' And the angel thus:

'At least from "Christum illum" let them sing,
And keep thy Faith: when cometh the Judge, the pains
Shall take not hold of such. Is that enough?'
And Patrick answered, 'That is not enough.'
Then Victor: 'Likewise this thy God accords:
The dreadful Coming and the Day of Doom
Thy land shall see not; for before that day
Seven years, a great wave arched from out the deep,
Ablution pure, shall sweep the isle, and take
Her children to its peace. Is that enough?'
And Patrick answered, 'That is not enough.'

Then spake once more that courteous angel kind:
'What boon demand'st thou?' And the Saint, 'No less
Than this. Though every nation, ere that day,
Recreant from creed and Christ, old troth forsworn,
In pride of life the scandal of the Cross
Should flee, as once the Apostles fled in fear,
This nation of my love, a priestly house,
Beside that Cross shall stand, fate-firm, like him
That stood beside Christ's Mother.' Straightway, as one
Who ends debate, the angel answered stern:
'That boon thou claimest is too great to grant:
Depart thou from this mountain, Cruachan,
In peace; and find that nation which thou lov'st,
That like thy body is, and thou her head,

For foes are round her set in valley and plain,
And instant is the battle.' Then the Saint:
'The battle for my people is not there,
With them, low down, but here upon this height
From them apart, with God. This Mount of God
Dowerless and bare I quit not till I die;
And dying, I will leave a man elect
To keep its keys, and pray my prayer, and name
Dying in turn, his heir, successive line,
Even till the Day of Doom.'
Then heavenward sped
Victor, God's angel, and the man of God
Turned to his offering; and all day he stood
Offering in heart that offering undefiled
Which Abel offer'd, and Melchisedek,
And Abraham, Patriarch of the faithful race,
In type, and which, in fulness of the times,
The Victim-Priest offer'd on Calvary,
And, bloodless, offers still in Heaven and Earth,
Whose impetration makes the whole Church one.
So stood he offering till the eve, and still
Offer'd; and as he offer'd, far in front
Along the aërial summit once again
Ran out that beam like fiery pillar prone
Or sea-path sunset-paved; and by his side
That angel stood. Then Patrick, turning not
His eyes in prayer upon the west close held,

Demanded, 'From the Maker of all worlds
What answer bringst thou?' Thus the angel spake:
'Down knelt in Heaven the Angelic Orders Nine,
And all the Prophets and the Apostles knelt,
And all the Creatures of the hand of God,
Visible, and invisible, down knelt,
While thou thy mighty mass, though altarless,
Offer'dst in spirit, and thine offering joined;
And all God's Saints on earth, or roused from sleep
Or on the wayside pausing, knelt, the cause
Not knowing; likewise yearned the Souls to God:
And lo! the Lord thy God hath heard thy prayer,
Since fortitude in prayer—and this thou know'st'—
(Smiling the Bright One spake) 'is that which lays
Man's hand upon God's sceptre. That thou sought'st
Shall lack not consummation. Many a race
Shrivelling in sunshine of its prosperous years,
Shall cease from faith, and, shamed though shameless, sink
Back to its native clay; but over thine
God shall the shadow of His Hand extend,
And through the night of centuries teach to her
In woe that song which, when the nations wake,
Shall sound their glad deliverance: nor alone
This nation, from the blind dividual dust
Of instincts brute, thoughts driftless, warring wills

By thee evoked, and shapen by thy hands
To God's fair image, which confers alone
Manhood on nations, shall to God stand true ;
But nations far in undiscovered seas,
Her stately progeny, while ages waste,
The kingly ermine of her Faith shall wear,
Fleece uncorrupted of the Immaculate Lamb,
For ever : lands remote shall lift to God
Her fanes ; and eagle-nurturing isles hold fast
Her hermit cells: thy nation shall not walk
Accordant with the Gentiles of this world,
But as a chosen people wear the crown
Or bear the cross : and when the end is come,
When in God's Mount the Twelve great Thrones are set,
And round it roll the Rivers Four of fire,
And in their circuit meet the Peoples Three :
Of Heaven, and Earth, and Hell, fulfill'd that day
Shall be the Saviour's word, what time He stretched
The crosier-staff forth from the glory-cloud,
And sware to thee, "When they that with Me walked
Sit with Me on their everlasting thrones,
Judging the Twelve Tribes of Mine Israel,
Thy people thou shalt judge in righteousness."

Thou therefore kneel, and bless thy Land of Eire.'

Then Patrick knelt, and blessed the land, and said,
' Praise be to God who hears the sinner's prayer.'

SAINT PATRICK AND THE TWO PRINCESSES.

FEDELM 'THE RED ROSE,' AND ETHNA 'THE FAIR.'

LIKE two sister fawns that leap,
Borne, as though on viewless wings,
Down bosky glade and ferny steep,
To quench their thirst at silver springs,
From Cruachan, through gorse and heather,
Raced the Royal Maids together.
From childhood thus the Twain had rushed
Each morn to Clebach's fountain-cell,
Ere earliest dawn the East had flushed,
To bathe them in its well;
Each morn with joy their young hearts tingled;
Each morn as—conquering cloud or mist—
The first beam with the wavelet mingled,
Mouth to mouth they kissed.

They stand by the fount with their unlooped hair—
A hand each raises—what see they there?

A white form seated on Clebach stone;
A kinglike presence: the monks stood nigh:
Fronting the dawn he sat alone;
On the star of morning he fixed his eye.
That crosier he grasped shone bright; but brighter
The sunrise flashed from Saint Patrick's mitre!

They gazed without fear. To a kingdom dear,
From the day of their birth, those Maids had been;
Of wrong they had heard; but it came not near;
They hoped they were dear to the Power Unseen.
They knelt when that Vision of Peace they saw;
They knelt, not in fear, but in loving awe:
The 'Red Rose' bloomed like that East afar;
The 'Fair One' shone like that morning star.

Then Patrick rose: no word he said,
But three times made the sacred Sign;
At the first, men say that the demons fled;
At the third flocked round them the Powers divine
Unseen. Like children devout and good,
Hands crossed on their bosoms, the maidens stood.

'Blessed and holy! This land is Eire
Whence come ye to her, and the King our Sire?'

We come from a Kingdom far off, yet near,
Which the wise love well, and the wicked fear:
We come with blessing and come with ban;
We come from the Kingdom of God with man.

'Whose is that Kingdom? And say, therein
Are the chiefs all brave, and the maids all fair?
Is it clean from reptiles, and that thing, sin?
Is it like this kingdom of King Laeghaire?'

The chiefs of that Kingdom wage war on wrong,
And the clash of their swords is sweet as song;
Fair are the maids, and so pure from taint,
The flash of their eyes turns sinner to saint;
There reptile is none, nor the ravening beast;
There light has no shadow, no end the feast.

'But say, at that feast hath the poor man place?
Is reverence there for the old head hoar?
For the cripple that never might join the race?
For the maimed that fought, and can fight no more?'

Reverence is there for the poor and meek,
And the great King kisses the worn, pale cheek;
And the King's Son waits on the pilgrim guest;
And the Queen takes the little blind child to her breast:

With a gold crown there is the just man crowned ;
But the false and the vengeful are branded and bound
In knots of serpents, and flung without pity
From the bastions and walls of God's saintly city.

Then the eyes of the Maidens grew dark, as though
That judgment of God had before them passed :
And the two sweet faces grew dim with woe—
But the rose and the radiance returned at last.

'Are gardens there? Are there streams like ours?
Is God white-headed, or youthful and strong?
Hang rainbows there o'er the happy bowers?
Are there sun and moon and the thrush's song?'

They have gardens there without noise or strife,
And there is the fruit of immortal life :
Four rivers circle that blissful bound ;
And Spirits float o'er it, and Spirits go round :
There, set in the midst, is the golden throne ;
And a rainbow Him girdeth that sits thereon :
Seven Virtues enweave it ; and lo! therein
The beams are His Holy Ones washed from sin.

As he spake, the hearts of the Maids beat time
To music in heaven of peace and love ;

And the deeper sense of that lore sublime
Came out from within them, and down from above;
By degrees came down; by degrees came out:
Who loveth, and hopeth, not long shall doubt.

'Who is your God? Is there love on His brow?
Oh how shall we love Him and find Him? How?'
The pure cheek flamed like the dawn-touched dew:
There was silence: then Patrick began anew.

The princes who ride in your father's train
Your love have courted, but sued in vain;—
Look up, O Maidens; make answer free:
What would ye have; and what would ye be?

'Pure we would be as yon wreath of foam,
Or the ripple which now yon sunbeams smite;
And joy we would have, and a songful home;
And one to rule us, and Love's delight.'

In love God fashioned whatever is,
The hills, and the seas, and the skiey fires;
For love He made them, and endless bliss,
Sustains, enkindles, uplifts, inspires:
That God is Father, and Son, and Spirit;
And the true and spotless His peace inherit,

And God made man, with his great sad heart,
That hungers when held from God apart.
Your sire is a King on earth: but I
Would mate you to One who is Lord on high:
There maid is bride; and her joy shall stand,
For the King's Son hath laid on her head His hand.

As he spake, the eyes of that lovely Twain
  Grew large with a tearful but glorious light,
Like skies of summer, late cleared by rain,
  When the full-orbed moon will be soon in sight.

'That Son of the King—is He fairest of men?
  That mate whom He crowns—is she bright and blest?
Does she chase the red deer at His side through the glen?
  Does she charm Him with song to His noontide rest?'

That King's Son strove in a long, long war:
His People He freed; yet they wounded Him sore;
And still in His hands, and His feet, and His side,
The scars of His sorrow are 'graved, deep-dyed.

Then the breasts of the Maidens began to heave
  Like harbour waves, when beyond the bar
The great waves gather, and wet winds grieve,
  And the roll of the tempest is heard afar.

'We will kiss, we will kiss those bleeding feet;
On those bleeding hands our tears shall fall;
And whatever on earth is dear or sweet,
For that wounded heart we renounce them all:

'Show us the way to His palace-gate:'—
That way is thorny, and steep, and straight;
By none can His palace-gate be seen,
Save those who have washed in the waters clean.

They knelt; on their heads the wave he poured
Thrice, in the name of the Triune Lord:
And their foreheads he signed with the Sign adored.
On Fedelm the 'Red Rose,' on Ethna 'The Fair,'
God's dew shone bright in that morning air;
And they say that Saint Agnes, 'twixt sister and sister,
As the Cross touched each, bent over and kissed her.

Then sang God's new-born Creatures, 'Behold!
We see God's City from heaven draw nigh:
But we thirst for the fountains divine and cold:
We must see the great King's Son, or die!
Come, Thou that com'st! Our hope is this,
That the body might die, and the soul, set free,
Swell out, like infant's lips, to the kiss
Of the Lover who filleth infinity!'

The City of God, by the water's grace,
Ye see: alone, they behold His Face,
Who have washed in the baths of Death their eyes,
And tasted His Eucharist Sacrifice.

'Give us the Sacrifice!' Each bright head
Bent toward it as sunflowers bend to the sun:
They ate; and the blood from the warm cheek fled:
The exile was over; the home was won:
A starry darkness o'erflowed their brain:
Far waters beat on some heavenly shore:
Like the dying away of a low, sweet strain,
The young life ebbed, and they breathed no more:
In death they smiled, as though on the breast
Of the Mother Maid they had found their rest.

The rumour spread: beside the bier
The King stood mute, and his camp, and court:
The Druids dark-robed drew surlily near:
And the Bards storm-hearted, and humbler sort:
The 'Staff of Jesus' Saint Patrick raised:
Angelic anthems above them swept:
There were that muttered; there were that praised:
But none who looked on that marvel wept.

For they lay on one bed, like Brides new-wed,
By Clebach well; and, the dirge days over,
On their smiling faces a veil was spread,
And a green mound raised that bed to cover.
Such were the ways of those ancient days—
To Patrick for aye that grave was given;
And above it a church he built in their praise;
For in them had Eire been spoused to heaven.

SAINT PATRICK AND THE CHILDREN OF FOCHLUT WOOD.

ONE day as Patrick sat upon a stone
Judging his people, Pagan children came,
All light and laughter, angel-like of mien,
Sueing for bread. He gave it, and they ate:
Then said he, 'Kneel;' and taught them prayer: but lo!
Sudden the stag hounds' music dinned the wind,
And to the woodlands rushed they. Patrick spake;
'It was the cry of children that I heard
Borne from the black wood o'er the midnight seas.
Where are those children? What avails though Kings
Have bowed before my Gospel, and in awe
Nations have knelt, unless mine eyes I set
On Fochlut Wood?' Thus speaking, he arose,
And, with the brethren journeying toward the West,
Stood on the confine of that forest old.

Then entered they that darkness; and the wood
Closed as a cavern round them. O'er it leaned
The cloud, and hissing, ran the bitter wind,

And moaned the trunks for centuries hollowed out
Yet stalwart still. There, rooted in the rock,
Stood the huge growths, by us unnamed, that frowned,
Perhaps on Partholan, the parricide,
When that first Pagan settler fugitive
Landed, a man foredoomed. Between the stems
The ravening beast now glared, now fled. Red leaves,
The last year's phantoms, rattled here and there.
The oldest wood that ever grew in Eire
Was Fochlut Wood, and gloomiest. Spirits of Ill
Their palace made it, and its labyrinths sowed
With poisons. Many a cave, with horrors thronged,
Within it yawned, and many a chasm unseen
Waited the unwary treader. Cry of wolf
Pierced the cold air, and gibbering ghosts were heard;
And o'er the black marsh went the wandering lights
That lure lost feet. A thousand paths their end
Found in the abyss. One only led to light:
That path was sharp with flints.
Then Patrick mused,
'O life of man, how dark a wood art thou!
Erring how many track thee till Despair,
Sad host, receives them in his crypt-like porch
At nightfall.' Mute he paced. The brethren feared;
And fearing, knelt to God. Made strong by prayer,
Westward once more they trod that dark, sharp way,

Till deeper gloom announced the night, then slept
By angels guarded. But the Saint all night
His vigil kept. The second day still on
Fared they, like mariners o'er strange seas borne,
That keep in mist their soundings when the rocks
Their passage vex, and breakers roar unseen.
At last Benignus cried, 'To God be praise!
He sends us better omens. See! the moss
Makes green the crag!' Ere long another spake:
'The worst is past! This freshness in the air
A welcome wafts us from the great salt sea;
Fair spreads the fern: the buds are on the spray,
And violets throng the grass.'
A few steps more
Brought them to where, with peaceful gleam, there spread
A forest pool, that mirror'd yew-trees twain
With beads like blood-drops hung. A sunset flash
Kindled a glory in the osiers brown
Encircling that still water. From the reeds
A sable bird, gold-circled, slowly rose;
But when the towering tree-tops he outsoared,
Eastward a great wind swept him as a leaf.
Serenely as he rose, a music soft
Swell'd from afar; but, as that storm o'ertook him
The music changed to one on-rushing note,
O'ertaken by a second; both, ere long,

Blended in wail unending. Patrick's brow,
Listening that wail, was altered, and he spake :
'Those were the voices that I heard when stood
By night beside me in that southern land
God's angel, girt for speed. Letters he bare
Unnumbered, full of woes. One held he forth,
Inscribed, "The Wailing of the Irish Race;"
And as I read that legend, on mine ear
Forth from a mighty wood on Erin's coast
There rang the cry of children, "Walk once more
Among us; bring us help!"' Thus Patrick spake;
Then westward towards that wailing paced with speed.

Ere long they came to where a river broad,
Swiftly amid the dense trees winding brimmed
The flower-enamelled margin, branch and bough
Down whirling 'mid its eddies. On the bank
Two maidens stood. Whiter than earliest streak
Of matin pearl dividing dusky clouds
Their raiment; and, as oft in silent woods
White beds of wind-flower on an earth-breeze lean,
So on the river-breeze that raiment wan
Shivered, back blown. Slender they stood and tall,
Their brows with violets bound; while shone, beneath,
The dark blue of their never-tearless eyes.
Then Patrick, 'For the sake of Him who lays

His blessing on the mourners, O ye maids,
Reveal to me your grief—if yours late sent,
Or sped in careless childhood.' And the maids :
'Happy whose careless childhood 'scaped the wound;'
Then she that seemed the saddest added thus:—
'Stranger! this forest is no roof of joy,
Nor we the only mourners; neither fall
Bitterer the widow's nor the orphan's tears
Now than of old; nor sharper than long since
That loss which maketh maiden widowhood.
In childhood first our sorrow came. One eve
Within our foster-parents' low-roofed house,
The winter sunset from our bed had waned:
I slept, and sleeping dreamed. Beside the bed
There stood a lovely Lady crowned with stars;
A sword went through her heart. Down from that sword
Blood trickled on the bed, and on the ground.
Sorely I wept. The Lady spake: "My child,
Weep not for me, but for thy country weep;
More deep her wound than mine. Cry loud for her;
The cry of grief is Prayer." I woke, all tears;
And lo! my little sister, stiff and cold,
Sat with wide eyes upon the bed upright.
That starry lady with the bleeding heart
She too had seen, and heard her. Clamour vast
Rang out; and all the wall was fiery red;

And flame was on the sea. A hostile clan,
Landing in mist, our ships and town had fired,
Our clansmen absent on a foray far,
And many an old man stricken, many a boy
To bondage dragged. Oh night with blood redeemed!
Yea, on the third day o'er the green waves rushed
The vengeance winged, with axe and torch, to quit
Wrong with new wrong, and many a time since then.
That night sad women on the sea sands toiled,
Drawing from wreck and ruin, beam or plank
To shield their babes. Our foster parents slain,
Unheeded we, the children of the chief,
Roamed the great forest. There our dream we told
To children likewise orphaned. Upon them
Fear fell as though themselves had dreamed that dream,
And back from them redoubled upon us;
Until at last from us and them rang out
(The dark wood heard it, and the midnight sea)
A great and bitter cry.'

'That cry went up,
O children, to the heart of God; and He
Down sent it, pitying, to a far-off land,
And on into my heart. By that first pang
Which left the eternal pallor in your cheeks,
O Maids, I pray ye, sing once more that song

Ye sang but late. I heard its long last note:
Fain would I hear the song that such death died.'

They sang: not scathless those that sing such song!
Grief, their instructress, of the Muses chief
To hearts by grief unvanquished, to their hearts
A melody had taught that neither spared
Singer nor listener. Pale when they began,
Paler it left them. He not less was pale
Who, out of trance awaking, thanked them thus:
'Now know I of that sorrow in you fixed;
What, and how great it is, and bless that Power
Who called me forth from nothing for your sakes,
And sent me to this wood. Maidens, lead on!
A chieftain's daughters ye; and he, your sire,
And with him she who gave you your sweet looks
(Sadder perchance than you in songless age)
They, too, must hear my tidings. Once a Prince
Went solitary from his golden throne,
Tracking the illimitable wastes, to find
One wildered sheep, the meanest of the flock,
And on His shoulders to His Father's house
Bare it. Thenceforth "Good Shepherd" was His name.
My tidings these: heralds are we, footsore,
That bring the heart-sore comfort.'

On they paced,

On by the rushing river without words.
Beside, the elder sister Patrick walked,
Benignus by the younger. Fair her face;
Majestic his, and sweet. Her face was sad
And awe-struck; his, with secret joy fulfilled,
Sent forth a gleam as when a morn-touched bay
Through ambush shines of woodlands. Soon they stood
Where sea and river met, and trod a path
Wet with salt spray, and drank the clement breeze,
And saw the quivering of the green gold wave,
And, far beyond, that fierce aggressor's bourn,
Fair haunt for savage race, a purple ridge
By rainy sunbeam gemmed from glen to glen,
Dim waste of wandering glories. The broad sun
Lay half sea-couched. A neighbouring height sent forth
Welcome of baying hounds; and, close at hand,
They reached the chieftain's keep.

A white-haired man
And long since blind, there sat he in his hall,
By age untamed. At times a fiery flash
Went from his sightless eyes; and oft the red
Burned on his forehead, while with fervid speech
Stirred by ill news or memory-stung, he banned
Foes, and false friend. Pleased by his daughters' tale,
At once he stretched his huge yet aimless hands
In welcome toward his guests. Beside him stood

(From thirty suitors won by that strong arm)
His mate of forty years. Pensive her face:
With parted youth the confidence of youth
Had left her. Beauty, too, though with remorse,
Its seat had half relinquished on a cheek
Long time its boast, and on that willowy form,
So shrinking now, where once in strength upsoared
The queenly presence. Tenderest grace not less
Haunted her life's dim twilight—meekness, love—
That humble love, all-giving, that seeks nought,
Self-reverent calm, and modesty in age.
An anxious eye she turned on him she loved;
And, bending, kissed at times that wrinkled hand,
By years and sorrows made his wife far more
Than in her nuptial bloom. Five sons, their hope,
These two had lost in war.

That eve it chanced
High feast was holden in the chieftain's tower
To solemnise his birthday. In they flocked,
Each after each, the warriors of the clan,
Not without pomp heraldic and fair state
Barbaric, yet beseeming. Unto each
Seat was assigned for deeds or lineage old,
And to the chiefs allied. Where each had place
Above him waved his banner. Not for this
Unhonoured were the pilgrim guests. They sat

Where, fed by pinewood and the seeded cone,
The loud hearth blazed. Bathed were the wearied feet
By maidens of the place and nurses grey,
And dried in linen fragrant still with flowers
Of years when those old nurses too were fair.
And now the board was spread, and carved the meat;
And jests ran round, and many a tale was told,
Some rude, but none opprobrious. Banquet done,
Page-led the harper entered, old, and blind:
The noblest ranged his chair, and spread the mat;
The loveliest raised his wine cup, one light hand
Laid on his shoulder, while the golden hair
Commingled with the silver. 'Sing,' they cried,
The death of Deirdrè; or that desolate sire
That slew his son, unweeting; or that Queen
Who from her palace pacing, with fixed eyes,
Stared at their Heads, in dreadful circle ranged,
Who mocked the friend they murdered. Leal and true,
The Bard who wrought that vengeance!' Then he sang.

'THE LAY OF THE HEADS.'

The Bard returns to a stricken house:
What shape is that he rears on high?
A withe of the Willow, set round with Heads:
They blot that evening sky.

A Widow meets him at the gates :
What fixes thus that Widow's eye?
She names the name; but she sees not the man,
Nor beyond him that western sky.

'Bard of the Brand, thou Foster-Sire
Of him they slew—their friend—my Lord—
What Head is that—the first—that frowns
Like a traitor self-abhorred?'

Daughter of Orgill wounded sore,
Thou of the fateful eye serene,
Fergus is he. The feast he made
That snared thy Cuchullene.

'What Head is that—the next—half-hid
In curls full lustrous to behold?
They mind me of a hand that once
I saw amid their gold.'

'T is Manadh. He that by the shore
Held rule, and named the waves his steeds :
'T was he that struck the stroke accursed—
Headless this day he bleeds.

'What Head is that close by—so still,
With half-closed lids, and lips that smile?
Methinks I know their voice : methinks
His wine they quaffed erewhile!'

'T was he raised high that severed head :
Thy head he raised, my Foster-Child !
That was the latest stroke I struck :
I struck that stroke, and smiled.

'What Heads are those—that twain, so like,
Flushed as with blood by yon red sky ?'
Each unto each, *his* Head they spurned :
Red on that grass they lie.

'That paler twain, which face the East ?'
Laegar is one ; the other Hilt :
Silent they watched the sport ! they share
The doom, that shared the guilt.

'Bard of the Vengeance ! well thou knew'st
Blood cries for blood ! O kind, and true,
How many, kith and kin, have died,
That mocked the man they slew ?'

O Woman of the fateful eye,
The untrembling voice, the marble mould,
Seven hundred men, in house or field,
For the man they mocked, lie cold.

'Their wives, thou Bard ? their wives ? their wives ?
Far off, or nigh, through Inisfail,
This hour what are they ? Stand they mute
Like me ; or make their wail ?'

O Eimer! women weep and smile:
The young have hope, the young that mourn:
But I am old: my hope was he;
He that can ne'er return.

'O Connal! lay me in his grave:
Oh! lay me by my Husband's side:
'Oh! lay my lips to his in death:'
She spake, and, standing, died.

She fell at last: in death she fell:
She lay, a black shade, on the ground:
And all her women o'er her wailed
Like sea-birds o'er the drowned.

Thus to the blind chief sang that harper blind,
Hymning the vengeance; and the great hall roared
With wrath of those wild listeners. Many a heel
Smote the rough stone in scorn of them that died
Not three days past—so seemed it. Direful hands,
Together dashed, thundered the Avenger's praise.
At last the tide of that fierce tumult ebbed,
And silence came. Then from her lowly seat
Beside her husband's spake the gentle Queen:
'My daughters, from your childhood ye were still
A voice of music in your father's house—
Not wrathful music. Sing that song ye made
Or found long since, and yet in forest sing,

If haply Power Unknown may hear and help.'
She spake, and at her word her daughters sang.

'Lost, lost, all lost! Oh tell us what is lost?
Behold, this too is hidden! Let him speak,
If any knows. The wounded deer can turn
And see the shaft that quivers in its flank;
The bird looks back upon its broken wing:
But we, the forest children, only know
Our grief is infinite, and hath no name.
What woman-prophet, shrouded in dark veil,
Whispered a hope as sad as Fear? Long since,
What Father lost his children in the wood?
Some God? And can a God forsake? Perchance
His face is turned to nobler worlds new-made:
Perchance his palace owns some later bride
That hates the dead Queen's children, and with charms
Prevails that they are exiled from his eyes,
The exile's winter theirs—the exile's song.

'Blood, ever blood! The sword goes raging on
O'er hill and moor; and with it, iron-willed,
On drags the hand that holds it, and the man,
To slake its ceaseless thirst for blood of men;
Fire takes the little cot beside the mere,
And leaps upon the upland village: fire
Up clambers to the castle on the crag;

And whom the fire has spared the hunger kills ;
And earth takes all into her thousand graves.

'Ah me ! the little linnet knows the branch
Whereon to build ; the honey-pasturing bee
The wild heath knows, and how to shape its cell ;
Upon the poisonous berry no bird feeds ;
So well their mother, Nature, helps her own.
Mothers forsake not ;—can a Father hate ?
Who knoweth but he yearns—that Sire Unseen
To clasp his children ? All is sweet and sane,
All, all save man ! Sweet is the summer flower,
The day-long sunset of the autumnal woods ;
Fair is the winter frost ; and all the heart
Shakes to the bleating lamb. Oh then what thing
Might be the life secure of man with man,
The infant's smile, the mother's kiss, the love
Of lovers, and the untroubled wedded home ?
This might have been man's lot. Who sent the woe ?
Who formed him first ? Who taught him first the ill way ?
One creature, only, sins ; and he the highest !

'Oh Higher than the highest ! Thou Whose hand
Made us—Who shaped'st that hand Thou wilt not clasp,
The eye Thou open'st not, the sealed-up ear !
Be mightier than man's sin ; for lo, how man

Seeks Thee, and ceases not: through noontide cave
And dark air of the dawn-unlighted peak
To Thee how long he strains the weak, worn eye
If haply he might see Thy vesture's hem
On utmost storm receding! Yea, how oft
Against the blind and tremulous wall of cliff
Tormented by sea surge, his ear he leans
If haply o'er it name of Thine might creep;
Or bends above the torrent-cloven abyss,
If falling flood might lisp it! Power Unknown!
He hears it not: Thou hear'st his beating heart
That cries to Thee for ever! From the veil
That shrouds Thee, from the wood, the cloud, the void,
Oh, by the anguish of all lands evoked,
Look forth! Though, seeing Thee, man's race should die,
One moment let him see Thee! Let him lay
At least his forehead on Thy foot in death!'

So sang the Maidens: but the warriors frowned;
And thus the blind King muttered, 'Bootless weed
Is plaint where help is none!' But wives and maids
And the thick-crowding poor, that many a time
Had wailed on war-fields o'er their brethren slain,
Went down before that music as the reeds
Before strong wind, then most when o'er them passed
Its last word, 'Death;' and grief's infection spread

From least to first; and weeping filled the hall.
Then on Saint Patrick fell compassion great.
He rose amid that concourse, and with voice
And words (now lost, alas, or all but lost),
Such that the Chief of sight amerced, beheld
The imagined man before him crowned with light,
Proclaimed that God who hideth not His face,
His people's King and Father, open flung
The portals of His realm, that, inward rolled
To their own music, with a golden tongue
Commanded all to enter. Who was He
Who called from nought the worlds? His name is Love!
In love those worlds he made. They have not lost,
The sun his splendour, nor the moon her light:
That miracle survives. Alas for thee!
Thou better miracle, fair human love;
That splendour shouldst have been of home and hearth,
Now quenched by mortal hate! Whence come our woes
But from our lusts? Oh desecrated law
By God's own finger on our hearts engraved,
How well art thou avenged! No dream it was,
That primal greatness, and that primal peace!
Man in God's image at the first was made,
A God to rule below!
He told it all—
Creation, and that Sin which marred its face;

And how the great Creator, creature made,
Forth issuing passed the immeasurable gulf
Which finite still severs from infinite,
And, back returning, on His shoulder bore
Total creation, like a wildered sheep,
Even to His Father's feet! He hid it not—
God—God for man incarnate—died for man:
Dead, with His Cross he thundered on the gates
Of Death's blind Hades. Then, with hands outstretched,
His Holy Ones that, in their penance prison
From hope in him had ceased not, to the light
Flashed from His bleeding hands and branded brow
Through darkness soared and reign with Him in heaven.
Their brethren we: the children of one Sire.
Long time he spake. The winds their wail forbore;
The sea lay mute. That wondrous tale complete,
Not sudden fell the silence; for, as when
A huge wave forth from ocean toiling mounts
High-arched, in solid bulk, the beach rock-strewn,
Burying his hoar head under echoing cliffs,
And after pause refluent to sea returns,
Not all at once is stillness, countless rills
Or devious winding down the steep, or borne
In crystal leap from sea-shelf to sea-well,
And sparry grot replying; gradual thus
With lessening cadence sank that great discourse

While round him gazed Saint Patrick, now the old
Regarding, now the young, and flung on each
In turn his boundless heart, and gazing longed
As only Apostolic heart can long
To help the helpless.
'Fair, O friends, the bourn
We dwell in! Holy King makes happy land:
Our King is in our midst. He gave us gifts;
Laws that are Love, the sovereignty of Truth.
What, sirs, ye knew Him not! But ye by signs
Foresaw His coming, as, when buds are red
Ye say "The spring is nigh us." Him, unknown,
Ye loved, your brother loving. Shepherd youths,
Who spread the pasture green beneath your lambs
And freshened it with snow-fed stream and mist?
Who but that Love unseen? Grey mariners,
Who lulled the rough seas round your midnight nets,
And sent the landward breeze? Pale sufferers wan,
Rejoice! His are ye; yea, and His the most!
Have ye not watched the eagle that upstirs
Her nest, and undersails her falling brood,
And stays them on her plumes, and bears them up
Till, taught by proof, their unguessed powers they learn
And breast the storm? Thus God stirs up his People;
Thus proves by pain. Ye too, O hearths well-loved!
How oft your sin-stained sanctities ye mourned!

Lo, from the cradle reigns the Bethlehem Babe!
Behold, henceforth the Virgin Mother spreads
Her shining veil above you!
Speak aloud,
Chieftains world-famed! I hear the ancient blood
That leaps against your hearts! What? Warriors ye!
Danger your birthright, and your pastime death!
Behold your foes! Before you plain they stand:
Ill passions, base ambitions, falsehood, hate:
On these wage war. A King is in your host.
His hands no roses plucked but on the Cross:
He came not hand of man in woman's tasks
To mesh. In woman's hand, in childhood's hand,
Much more in man's, He lodged His conquering sword;
Them too His soldiers named, and vowed to war.
Rise, clan of Kings, rise, champions of man's race,
Heaven's sun-clad army militant on earth,
One victory gained, the realm decreed is ours.
The bridal bells ring out, for Low with High
In nuptials new is blended. It is past,
The sin, the exile, and the grief. O man,
Take thou, renewed, thy sister-mate: return,
And meet once more thy Maker, for he walks
Once more within thy garden, in the cool
Of the world's eve!'

The words that Patrick spake

Were words of power. Not futile did they fall :
But, probing, healed a sorrowing people's wound.
Round him they stood, as oft in Grecian days,
Some haughty city sieged, her penitent sons
Thronging green Pnyx or templed Forum hushed,
Stood listening to that People's one true Voice,
The man that ne'er had flattered, ne'er deceived,
Nursed no false hope. It was the time of Faith ;
Open was then man's ear, open his heart :
Pride spurned not then that chiefest strength of man,
The power, by Truth confronted, to believe.
Not savage was that wild, barbaric race :
Spirit was in them. On their knees they sank,
With foreheads lowly bent ; and when they rose
Such sound went forth as when late anchored fleet
By morning touched, shakes out its canvas broad
And sweeps into new waters. Man with man
Clasped hands ; and each in each a something saw
Till then unseen. As though flesh-bound no more,
Their souls had touched. One Truth, the Spirit's life,
Lived in them all, a vast and common joy.
And yet as when, that Pentecostal morn,
Each heard the Apostle in his native tongue,
So now, on each, that Truth, that Joy, that Life
Shone forth with diverse beam. Deep peace to one
Those tidings seemed, a still vale after storm ;

To one a sacred rule, steadying the world;
A third exulting saw his youthful hope
Written in stars; a fourth triumphant hailed
The just cause, long oppressed. Some laughed; some wept:
But she, that aged chieftain's mournful wife,
Clasped to her boding breast his hoary head
Loud clamouring, 'Death is dead; and not for long
That dreadful grave can part us.' Last of all,
He too believed. Full many a crafty scheme,
Or worse that head had shaped:—behind them all
Nature held fast her own.
. . . Oh happy night!
Back through the gloom of centuries sin-defaced
With what a saintly radiance thou dost shine!
They slept not, on the loud-resounding shore
In glory roaming. Many a feud that night
Perished; and schemes of wrong, now mockery made,
Lay quenched in their own shame. Far shone the fires
Crowning dark hills with gladness: soared the song;
And heralds sped from coast to coast to tell
How He the Lord of all, no Power Unknown,
But like a man rejoicing in his house,
Ruled the glad earth. That demon-haunted wood,
Sad Erin's saddest region, rang at last
With hymns of men and angels. Onward sped

Over the long, unbreaking, azure waves
A mighty moon, full-faced, as though on winds
Of rapture borne. With earliest red of dawn
Northward once more above the waters rushed
The winged barks to that long hated shore—
Not now with axe and torch. His name they bare
Who linked in one the nations.

On a cliff
Where Fochlut's wood blackened the northern sea
A convent rose. Therein those sisters twain
Whose cry had summoned Patrick o'er the deep,
Abode, no longer weepers. Pallid still,
In radiance now their faces shone; and sweet
Their psalms amid the clangour of rough brine.
Ten years, in praise to God and good to men,
That happy precinct housed them. Grief her work
In life's young morn for them had perfected;
Their eve was bright as childhood. When the hour
Came for their blissful transit, from their lips
Pealed forth ere death that great triumphant chant
Sung by the Virgin Mother. Ages passed;
And, year by year, on wintry nights, that song
By mariners was heard,—a cry of joy.

SAINT PATRICK AND KING LAEGHAIRE.

'THOU son of Calphurn, in peace go forth!
This hand shall slay them whoe'er shall slay thee!
The carles shall stand to their necks in earth
Till they die of thirst who mock or stay thee!

'But my father, Nial, who is dead long since,
Permits not me to believe thy word;
For the servants of Jesus, thy heavenly Prince,
Once dead, lie flat as in sleep, interr'd;
But we are as men through dark floods that wade;
We stand in our black graves undismay'd;
Our faces are turn'd to the race abhorr'd,
And ready beside us stand spear and sword,
Ready to strike at the last great day,
Ready to trample them back into clay.

'This is my realm, and men call it Eire,
Wherein I have lived and live in hate
(Like Nial before me and Erc his sire)
Of the race Lagenian, ill-named the Great!'

Thus spake Laeghaire, and his host rush'd on,
A river of blood as yet unshed :—
At noon they fought : and at set of sun
That King lay captive, that host lay dead !

The brave foe loosed him, but bade him swear
He would never demand of them Tribute more.
So Laeghaire by the dread 'God-Elements' swore,
By the moon divine and the earth and air ;
He swore by the wind and the broad sunshine
That circle for ever both land and sea,
By the long-back'd rivers, and mighty wine,
By the cloud far-seeing, by herb and tree,
By the boon spring shower, and by autumn's fan,
By woman's breast, and the head of man,
By night and the noonday Demon he swore
He would claim the Boarian Tribute no more.

But with time wrath wax'd ; and he brake his faith :
Then the Powers he had worshipp'd they wrought his death ;
For the Wind and Sun-Strength by Cassi's side
Came down and smote on his head that he died.
Death-sick three days on his throne he sate ;
Then died, as his father died, great in hate.

They buried their King upon Tara's hill,
In his grave upright;—there stands he still:
Upright there stands he as men that wade
By night through a castle-moat, undismay'd;
On his head is the crown, the spear in his hand,
And he looks to the hated Lagenian land.

Such rites in the time of wrath and wrong
Were Eire's: baptized, they were hers no longer:
For Patrick had taught her his sweet new song,
'Though hate is strong, yet love is stronger.'

SAINT PATRICK AND THE IMPOSTOR;

OR, MAC KYLE OF MAN.

In Uladh, near Magh Inis, lived a chief,
Fierce man and fell. From orphaned childhood he
Through lawless youth to blood-stained middle age
Had rushed as stormy morn to stormier noon,
All wrongs, except that still the poor he spared,
Working with iron will; a child of death.
Thus spake he to his followers, while the woods
Snow-cumber'd creaked, their scales of icy mail
Ruffled by winter winds: 'At last he comes,
He that deceives the people with great signs,
And for the tinkling of a little gold
Preaches new Gods. Where rises yonder smoke
Beyond the pinewood, camps this Lord of Dupes:
How say ye? Over Uladh shall he track,
As o'er the land beside, his venomous way?
Forth with your swords! and if that God he serves
Can serve him, let him prove it!
Dark with wrath

Thus spake Mac Kyle; and all his men approved,
Shouting, while downward fell the snows hard-caked,
Loosened by shock of forest-echoed palms,
Save Garban. Crafty he, and full of lies,
That thing which Patrick hated. Sideway first
Glancing, as though some secret foe were nigh,
He spake: 'Mac Kyle! a counsel for thine ear!
A man of counsel I, as thou of war!
The people love this stranger. Patrick slain,
Their wrath will blaze against us, and demand
An *eric* for his head. Let us by craft
His craft unravel first: then safe our choice,
Exposed to slay him, or great ransom take.
Impostors lack not gold. Upon a bier
Lay me as dead: above me spread a cloth,
And make your wail: and when the seer draws nigh
Worship him, crying, "Lo, our friend is dead!
Kneel, prophet, kneel, and pray that God thou serv'st
To raise him." If he kneels, no prophet he,
But like the race of mortals. From my face
Sweep then the cloth; and, laughing, I will rise.'

Thus counsell'd Garban; and the counsel pleased;
Yet pleased not God. Upon a bier, branch-strewn,
Their man they laid, and o'er him spread a cloth;
Then, moving toward that smoke behind the pines,

To Patrick wept, 'Behold our friend is dead!
Great prophet kneel; and pray the God thou serv'st
To raise him from the dead.'
The man of God
A sentence-speaking eye upon them fixed—
'Yea! he is dead. In this ye speak no lie:
Behold, this day shall Garban's covering be
The covering of the dead. Remove that cloth.'

Then drew they from his face the cloth; and lo!
Beneath it Garban lay, a corpse stone-cold.

Amazement fell upon that bandit throng,
The corpse contemplating, and on Mac Kyle
Grief for his friend, remorse, and strong belief,
A threefold power: for she that at his birth
(Her brief life faithful to that Law she knew)
Had died, in region where desires are crowned,
That hour was strong in prayer. 'From God he came,'
Thus cried they; 'and a work accursed we worked,
Tempting His prophet.' Patrick heard, and spake;
'Not me ye tempted, but the God I serve.'
At last Mac Kyle made answer: 'I have sinned;
I, and this people, whom I made to sin:
Now therefore to thy God we yield ourselves
Liegemen henceforth, his thralls as slave to Lord,

Or horse to master. That which thou command'st
That will we do.' And Patrick said, 'Believe;
Confess your sins; and be baptized to God,
The Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit,
And live true life.' Then Patrick where he stood
Above the dead, with hands uplifted preached
To these in anguish and in terror bowed
The tidings of great joy from Bethlehem's Crib
To Calvary's Cross. Sudden upon his knees,
Heart-pierced, as though that Head thorn-pierced, he saw,
Fell that wild chief, and was baptized to God;
And, lifting up his great strong hands, while still
The waters streamed adown his matted locks,
He cried, 'Alas, my master, and my sire!
A mighty sin I sinned; for in my heart
Fixed was my purpose, soon as thou hadst knelt,
To slay thee with my sword. Therefore judge thou
What ransom I must pay to quit my sin?'
Him Patrick answered, 'God shall be thy Judge:
Arise, and to the seaside flee, as one
That flies his foe. There shalt thou find a boat
Made of one hide: eat nought, and nothing take
Except one cloak alone: but in that boat
Sit thou, and bear the sin-mark on thy brow,
Facing the waves, oarless and rudderless;

And bind the boat chain thrice around thy feet,
And fling the key with strength into the main,
And wheresoever wind, and wave, and breath
Of God shall waft thee, there till death live thou,
Working the Will Divine.' The chief replied,
'I, that commanded others, can obey;
Such lore alone is mine: but for this man
That sinned my sin, alas, to see him thus!'
To whom the Saint, 'For him, when thou art gone,
My prayer shall rise. If God will raise the dead
He knows: not I.'
Then rose that chief, and rushed
Down to the shore, as one that flies his foe;
Nor ate, nor drank, nor spake to wife or child,
But loosed a little boat, of one hide made,
And sat therein, and round his ankles thrice
The boat chain wound; and flung the key far forth
Above the ridged sea foam. The Lord of all
Gave ordinance to the wind, and, as a leaf,
Swift rushed that boat, oarless and rudderless,
Over the on-shouldering, broad-backed, glaucous wave,
Slow-rising like the rising of a world,
And purple wastes beyond, with funeral plume
Crested, a pallid pomp. All night the chief
Under the roaring tempest heard the voice
That preached the Son of Man; and when the morn

Shone out, his coracle drew near the surge
Reboant on Manann's Isle. Not unbeheld
Rose it, and fell; not unregarded danced
A black spot on the inrolling ridge, then hung
Suspense upon the mile-long cataract
That, overtoppling, changed grass-green to light,
And drowned the shores in foam. Upon the sands
Two white-haired Elders in the salt air knelt
Offering to God their early orisons,
Coninri and Romael. Sixty years
These two unto a hard and stubborn race
Had preached the Word; and gaining by their toil
But thirty souls, had daily prayed their God
Some happier arm to send, ere yet they died,
To reap the ill-grown harvest of their youth.
Ten years they prayed, not doubting, and from God,
Who hastens not, this answer had received,
'Ye shall not die until ye see his face.'
Therefore, each morning, peered they o'er the waves,
Keen-watching. These through breakers dragged the man,
Their wished-for prize, half-frozen, and nigh to death,
And bare him to their home, and fed, and warmed,
And heaped his couch with skins. Deep sleep he slept
Till evening lay upon the level sea
With roses like a bridal chamber strewn,
And shone the evening star. Rested, he waked

And sought the shore. From earth, and sea, and sky,
Then passed into his spirit the Spirit of Love;
And there his vow he vowed, fierce chief no more,
But soldier of the cross.

The weeks ran on,
And daily to their pupil lore divine
Those Elders ministered, demanding still,
'Son, understandst thou? Gird thee like a man
To clasp, and hold, the total faith of Christ,
And give us leave to die.' The months fled fast:
Ere violets bloomed, the creed he knew; and when
Fat heathery hills purpled the autumnal air,
He sang the psalter whole. That tale he told
Had power, and Patrick's name. His strenuous arm
Labouring with theirs, their tardy harvest reaped,
Till wondering gazed their wearied eyes on barns
Knee-deep in grain. At last an eve there fell,
When, on the shore in commune, with such might
Discoursed that pilgrim of the things of God,
Such insight calm, and wisdom reverence-born,
Each on the other gazing in their hearts
Heard yet again that answer from the Lord,
'Now is your task completed: ye shall die.'

Then on the red sand knelt those Elders twain
With hands upraised, and all their hoary hair

Tinged like the foam-wreaths by that setting sun,
And sang their 'Nunc Dimittis.' At its close
High on the sandhills, 'mid the tall hard grass
That sighed eternal o'er the unbounded waste,
They found the place where first, that bark descried,
Their sighs to songs were changed. That spot they marked,
And said, 'Our Resurrection place is here:'
And, on the third day dying, in that place
The man who loved them laid them, at their heads
Planting one cross, because their hearts were one,
And one their lives. The snowy-breasted bird
Of ocean o'er their undivided graves
Oft flew with wailing note; but they rejoiced
'Mid God's high realm glittering in endless youth.

These two with Christ, on him, their son in Christ,
Their mantle fell; and strength to him was given.
Long time alone he toiled; then round him flocked
Helpers from far. Ere long, by voice of all
He gat the Island's great episcopate,
And king-like ruled the region. This is he,
Mac Kyle of Uladh, bishop, monk, and Saint,
Saint Patrick's missioner in Manann's Isle,
Sinner one time, and, after sinner, Saint
World-famous. May his prayer for sinners plead!

PATRICK AND THE KNIGHT;

OR, THE INAUGURATION OF IRISH CHIVALRY.

'THOU shalt not be a Priest,' he said;
'Christ hath for thee a lowlier task;
Be thou His Soldier! Wear with dread
His Cross upon thy shield and casque!
Put on God's armour, faithful knight!
Mercy with justice, love with law;
Nor e'er except for truth and right
Thy sword, cross-hilted, dare to draw.'

He spake, and with his crosier pointed
Graved on the broad shield's brazen boss
(That hour baptized, confirm'd, anointed
Stood Erin's chivalry) the Cross:
And there was heard a whisper low—
Prince of God's armies, was it thine?—
'Thou Sword, keep pure thy virgin vow,
And trenchant shalt thou be as mine!'

SAINT PATRICK AT CASHEL;

OR, THE BAPTISM OF AENGUS.

WHEN Patrick now o'er Ulster's forest bound,
And Connact, echoing to the western wave,
And Leinster, fair with hill-suspended woods,
Had raised the cross, and where the deep night ruled,
Splendour had sent of everlasting light,
Sole peace of warring hearts, to Munster next,
Thomond and Desmond, Heber's portion old,
He turned; and, fired by love that mocks at rest,
Through raging storm, pushed on the whole night long,
Intent the Annunciation Feast to hold
At Cashel of the Kings. The royal keep
High-seated on its rock, as morning broke,
Faced them at last; and at the selfsame hour
Aengus, in his father's absence lord,
Rising from happy sleep and heaven-sent dreams,
Went forth, upon his youthful front that light
Which shines from spotless soul. With sudden start

The prince stept back; for, o'er the fortress court,
Like grove storm-levelled lay the idols huge,
False Gods and foul, that long had awed the land,
Prone, without hand of man. Oer-awed he gazed.
Then on the air there rang a sound of hymns,
And by the eastern gate Saint Patrick stood,
The brethren round him. On their shaggy garb
Auroral dews, struck by the rising sun,
Glittered, that diamond-panoplied they seemed,
And as a heavenly vision. At that sight
The youth, descending with a wondering joy,
Welcomed his guests: and, ere an hour, the streets,
Far down, shone forth like flowering meads in spring,
So thronged the folk in holiday attire
To see the man far-famed. 'Who spurns our Gods?'
Once they had cried in wrath: but, year by year,
Tidings of some deliverance great and strange,
Some life more noble, some sublimer hope,
Some regal race enthroned beyond the grave,
Had reached them from afar. The best believed,
Great hearts for whom nor earthly love sufficed,
Nor earthly fame. The meaner scoffed: yet all
Desired the man. Delay their thirst had edged.

Then Patrick, standing up among them, spake,
And God was with him. Not as when loose tongue

Babbles vain rumour, or the Sophist spins
Thought's air-hung cobwebs gay with Fancy's dews,
Spake he, but words of might, as when a man
Bears witness to the things which he has seen,
And tells of that he knows : and as the harp
Attested is by rapture of the ear,
And sunlight by the eye, and neither craves
Inferior demonstration, so his words
Self-proved, went forth and conquered : for man's mind,
Created in His image who is Truth,
Challenged by truth, with recognising voice
Cries out, 'Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone,'
And cleaves thereto. In all that listening host
One vast, dilating heart yearned to its God.
Then burst the bond of years. No pause of doubt
Knew they. God laid on them the robe of Truth ;
Down fell at once the many-coloured weed
Of error ; and, reclothed ere yet unclothed,
They walked a new-born earth. The blinded Past
Fled, vanquished. Glorious more than strange it seemed
That he who fashioned man should come to man,
And raise by ruling. They, his trumpet heard,
In glory spurned demons misdeemed for Gods.
Their great Chief had returned : the captive clan
Trod down the usurping foe.

Then rose the cry

'Join us to Christ!' With eyes upon them set
Patrick replied, 'Know ye what thing ye seek,
Ye that would fain be house-mates with my King?
Ye seek His Cross! Yet if to Christ your heart
Be liegeful, name the place, decree the day,
His baptism shall be yours.'

That eve, while shone
The sunset on the green-touched woods, that, grazed
By onward flight of unalighting spring,
Caught warmth and kindled, Prince Aengus stood
With Patrick in a westward-facing tower
Which overlooked far regions, town-besprent,
And lit with winding waters. Thus he spake;
'My Father! what is sovereignty of man?
Can I this people shield from death, from sin,
Taking them up into my breast, like God?
I trow not so! Mine be the lowliest place,
Following that King who left his Father's throne
Lowest to walk.' And Patrick answered thus,
'Best lot thou choosest, son. If thine that lot
Thou know'st not yet; nor I. The Lord, thy God,
Will teach us.'

When the day decreed had dawned,
Loud rang the bull-horn; and on every breeze
Floated the banners, saffron, green, and blue;
While issuing from the horizon's utmost verge

The full-voiced People flocked. So swarmed of old
Some race its borders leaving, instinct-urged,
(Sad coasts, man-hardening winter's flowerless realm)
On southern slopes, when now, their long march o'er,
Shone out the plains of promise. Bright they came :
No summer sea could wear a blithsomer sheen
Though every dancing crest and milky plume
Ran on with rainbows braided. Minstrel songs
Wafted like winds those onward hosts, or swayed
Or stayed them ; while among them heralds passed
Lifting white wands of office. Foremost rode
Ailill, the younger brother of the Prince.
A milk-white horse he ruled. Fluttered, breeze-borne
His mantle green, while all his golden hair
Streamed back redundant from the ring of gold
Circling his head uncovered. Loveliest light
Of innocence and joy was all that face :
The maidens marked it well. So young that brow
None blushed to gaze upon it. Brighter yet
Beamed he, his brother noting. On the verge
Of Cashel's Rock that hour Aengus stood,
By Patrick's side. When near the concourse drew
He gazed upon it, and with clasped hands cried,
' My Father, fair is sunrise, fair the sea,
The hills, the plains, the wind-stirred wood, the maid ;
But what is like a People onward borne

In gladness? When that sight I see, my heart
Grows large as palace-gates wide open flung,
That say to all men, "Enter." ' Then the Saint
Laid on that royal head a hand of might,
And said, 'The Will of God decrees thee King!
Son of this People art thou: Sire one day
Thou shalt be! Son and Sire in one are King.
Shepherd for God thy flock, thou Shepherd true!'
Thus spake he; and the word found way to Heaven.

Meantime that multitude innumerable
Had reached the rock; and, now the winding road
In pomp ascending, faced those fair-wrought gates
Which, by the warders at the Prince's sign
Drawn back, to all gave entrance. In they streamed
By their own murmur companied, till now
Filled was the central courtway. Patrick stood
High stationed on a prostrate idol's base,
In vestments of the Vigil of that Feast
The Annunciation, which with annual boon
Whispers, while melting snows dilate those streams
Purer than snows, to universal earth
That Maiden Mother's joy. The in-thronging crowds
Watching, the Apostle gave them welcome thus:
'As though into the great Triumphant Church,
O guests of God, ye flock! Her place is Heaven:

Sirs ! we this day are militant below.
Not less, advance in faith. Behold your crowns—
Obedience and Endurance.'
Then began
The Rite; and first, his people's Chief and Head,
Beside the font Aengus stood; his face,
Sweet as a maid's, yet grave as front of eld.
For reverence he had laid his crown aside,
And from the deep hair to the unsandalled feet
Was raimented in white. With mitred front
And massive book, forward Saint Patrick leaned,
Clasping the crosier staff. Then prayer on prayer
Went up to God; while gift on gift from God,
All Angel-like, invisibly to man,
Descended. Thrice above that princely brow
The cleansing waters Patrick poured, and traced
Three times thereon the Venerable Sign,
Naming the name Triune. The Rite complete,
Awestruck that concourse downward gazed. At last
Lifting their eyes, the Prince's face they marked
That pale it was though bright, anguished and pale,
While from his naked foot a blood-stream gushed,
And o'er the pavement welled. The crosier's point
Weighted with weight of all that stately form,
Had pierced it through. 'Why suffer'dst thou so long
The pain in silence?' Patrick said, heart-grieved:

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And thus Aengus answered, 'O my Sire,
I thought, thus called to follow Him Whose feet
Were pierced with nails, haply the blissful Rite
Some little pain included.'
At that word
The large eyes of the Apostolic man
Grew larger; and within them lived that light
Not fed by moon or sun, a visible flash
Of that invisible lightning which from God
Vibrates ethereal through the world of souls,
Vivific strength of Saints. The mitred brow
Uptowered sublime: the strong, yet wrinkled hands,
Meeting, ascended, till the crosier's head
Glittered above the concourse, like a star.
At last, his hands disparting, down he drew
From highest heaven the blessing, speaking thus;
'For this cause may the blessing, Sire of Kings,
Cleave to thy seed for ever! Spear and sword
Before them fall! In glory may the race
Of Nadfrach's sons, Aengus, and Ailill,
Hold sway on Cashel's summit! Be their Kings
Great-hearted men, potent to rule and guard
Their people; just to judge them; men of God;
That so through them the everlasting King
May flood their land with blessing.' Thus he spake;
And round him all that nation said, 'Amen.'

Thus solemn feast in Cashel of the Kings
Held they till all that land was clothed with Christ:
And when the parting came, from Cashel's steep
Thus with stretched arms Patrick the blessing sent:
'The Blessing fall upon the pasture broad,
On fruitful mead, and every corn-clad hill,
And woodlands rich with flowers that children love;
Unnumbered be the homesteads, and the hearths:—
A blessing on the women, and the men,
On youth, and maiden, and the suckling babe;
A blessing on the fruit-bestowing tree,
And foodful river tide. Be true; be pure,
Not living from below, but from above,
As men that over-top the world. And build
Here, on this rock, high place of idols once,
A kingly Church to God. The same shall stand
For aye, or, wrecked, from ruin rise restored,
His witness till He cometh. Over Eire
The Blessing speed till time shall be no more
From Cashel of the Kings.'
Then forth he fared:
The People bare him through their kingdom broad
With banner and loud song: but o'er its bound
The women of that People followed still
A half day's journey with lamenting voice;
Then silent stood, lifting their babes on high;
And, crowned with twofold blessing, home returned.

SAINT PATRICK AND OISÌN. I.

THE CONTENTION OF SAINT PATRICK WITH OISÌN.

WHEN Patrick the faith to Oisìn had preached
He believed, and in just ways trod;
Yet oft for old days he grieved, and thus
Stormed oft at the Saint of God.

'Woe, woe! for the priestly tribe this hour
On the Feinè Hill have sway!
Glad am I that scarce their shapes I see;
Half-blind am I this day.

'Woe, woe, thou Palace of Cruachan!
Thy sceptre is down and thy sword;
The chase goes over thy grassy roof,
And the monk in thy courts is lord!

'Thou man with the mitre and vestments broad,
And the bearing of grave command,
Rejoice that Diarmid this day is dust!'
Right heavy was his clenched hand!

'Thou man with the bell! I rede thee well
Were Diorraing living this day,
Thy book he would take, and thy bell would break
On the base of yon pillar gray!

'Thou man with miraculous crosier-staff,
Though puissant thou art, and tall,
Were Goll but here, he would dash thy gear
In twain on thy convent wall!

'Were Conan living, the bald-head shrill,
With the scourge of his scoff and gibe,
He would break thy neck, and thy convent wreck,
And lash from the land thy tribe!

'But one of our chiefs thy head had spared—
My Oscar—my son—my child:
He was storm in the foray, and fire in the fight,
But in peace he was maiden mild.'

Then Patrick answered: 'Old man, old man,
That Pagan realm lies low.
This day Christ ruleth. Forget thy chiefs,
And thy deeds gone by forego!

'High feast thou hast on the festal days,
And cakes on the days of fast—'
'Thou liest, thou priest, for in wrath and scorn
Thy cakes to the dogs I cast!'

'Old man, thou hearest our Christian hymns:
Such strains thou hadst never heard—'
'Thou liest, thou priest! for in Letter Lee wood
I have listened its famed blackbird!

'I have heard the music of meeting swords,
And the grating of barks on the strand,
And the shout from the breasts of the men of help
That leaped from the decks to land.

'Twelve hounds had my sire, with throats like bells,
Loud echoed on lake and bay:
By this hand, they lacked but the baptism rite
To chaunt with thy monks this day!'

Oisìn's white head on his breast dropt down,
Till his hair and his beard, made one,
Shone out like the spine of a frosty hill
Far seen in the wintry sun.

'One question, O Patrick! I ask of thee,
Thou king of the saved and shriven:
My sire, and his chiefs, have they their place
In thy City, star-built, of heaven?'

'Oisìn, old chief of the shining sword,
That questionest of the soul,
That City they tread not who loved but war:
Their realm is a realm of dolè.'

'By this head, thou liest, thou son of Calphurn!
In heaven I would scorn to bide,
If my father and Oscar were exiled men,
And no friend at my side.'

'That City, old man, is the City of Peace:
Loud anthems, not widows' wail—'
'It is not in bellowings chiefs take joy,
But in songs of the wars of Fail!

'Are the men in the streets like Baoignè's chiefs?
Great-hearted like us are they?
Do they stretch to the poor the ungrudging hand,
Or turn they their heads away?

'Thou man with the chaunt, and thou man with the creed,
This thing I demand of thee:
My dog, may he pass through the gates of heaven?
May my wolf-hound enter free?'

'Old man, not the buzzing gnat may pass,
Nor sunbeam look in unbidden:
The King there sceptred knows all, sees all:
From him there is nothing hidden.'

'It never was thus with Fionn, our king!
In largess our Fionn delighted:
The hosts of the earth came in, and went forth
Unquestioned, and uninvited!'

'Thy words are the words of madness, old man,
Thy chieftains had rule one day;
Yet a moment of heaven is three times worth
The warriors of Eire for aye!'

Then Oisìn uplifted his old white head:
Like lightning from hoary skies
A flash went forth 'neath the shaggy roofs
Low-bent o'er his sightless eyes:

'Though my life sinks down, and I sit in the dust,
Blind warrior and gray-haired man,
Mine were they of old, thou priest over bold,
Those chiefs of Baoignè's clan!'

And he cried, while a spasm his huge frame shook,
'Dim shadows like men before me,
My father was Fionn, and Oscar my son,
Though to-day ye stand vaunting it o'er me!'

Thus raged Oisìn—'mid the fold of Christ,
Still roaming old deserts wide
In the storm of thought, like a lion old;
Though lamblike at last he died.

SAINT PATRICK AND THE CHILDLESS MOTHER.

Across his breast one hundred times each day
Saint Patrick drew the Venerable Sign,
And sixty times by night: and whensoe'er
In travel, Cross was seen, far off or nigh,
On lonely moor, or rock, or heathy hill,
(For Eire was then thick sown with Christian seed)
He sought it, and beneath it knelt. Yet once,
While cold in winter shone the star of eve
Upon their board, thus spake a youthful monk:
'Three times this day, my father, didst thou pass
The Cross of Christ unmarked. At morn thou saw'st
A last year's lamb that by it sheltered lay,
At noon a dove that near it sat and mourned,
At eve a little child that round it raced,
Well pleased with each; yet saw'st thou not that Cross,
Nor mad'st thou any reverence!' At that word
The Saint arose, and left the meat, and went.

Dark was the earth ere that remembered spot
He reached: and lo! where lamb had lain, and dove
Had mourned, and child had raced, there stood indeed,
High-raised, the Cross of Christ. Before it long
He knelt, and kneeling, marked that on a tomb
That Cross was raised. Then, inly moved by God,
The Saint demanded, 'Who, of them that walked
The sun-warmed earth lies here in darkness hid?'
And answer made a lamentable Voice:
'Pagan I lived, my own soul's bane:—when dead,
Men buried here my body.' Patrick then:
'How stands the Cross of Christ on Pagan grave?'
And answered thus the lamentable Voice:
'A woman's work. She had been absent long;
Her son had died: near mine his grave was made;
Half blind was she through fleeting of her tears,
And, erring, raised the Cross upon my tomb,
Misdeeming it for his. Nightly she comes,
Loud wailing as the Pagan mothers wail.
So wailed my mother once, while pain tenfold
Ran through my bodiless being. For her sake,
If pity dwells on earth or highest heaven,
This mourner may it comfort. Christian she,
And capable of pity.'
Then the Saint
Cried loud, 'O God, Thou seest this Pagan's heart,

That love within it dwells : therefore not his
That doom of souls all hate, and self-exiled,
To whom Thy presence were a woe twice told.
Eternal Pity ! pity Thou Thy work ;—
Sole Peace of them that love Thee, grant him peace.'
So Patrick prayed ; and in the heaven of heavens
God heard his servant's prayer. Then Patrick mused :
'Now know I why I passed that Cross unmarked ;
It was not that it seemed.'
As thus he knelt,
Behold, upon the cold and bitter wind
Rang wail on wail ; and o'er the moorland moved
What seemed a woman's if a human form.
That miserable phantom onward came
With cry succeeding cry that sank or swelled
As sank or rose the moor. Arrived at last,
She heeded not the Saint, but on that grave
Dashed herself down. Long time that woman wailed ;
And Patrick, for the reverence of her woe,
Forbore. At last he spake low-toned as when
Best listener knows not when soft strain begins.
'Daughter ! the sparrow falls not to the ground
Without his Maker. He that made thy son
Hath sent His Son all woes of men to bear,
And every foe subdue—the latest, Death.'
Then rolled that woman on the Saint an eye

As when the last survivor of a host
Glares on some pitying conqueror. 'Ho! the man
That treads upon my grief! He ne'er had sons;
And thou, O son of mine, hast left no sons,
Though oft I said, "When I am old, his babes
Shall climb my knees." My boast was mine in youth;
But now mine age is made a barren stock,
And as a blighted briar.' In scorn she turned;
And as on blackening tarn gust follows gust,
So followed wail on wail. On strode the night:
The jagged forehead of that forest old
Alone was seen: all else was gloom. At last
With voice, though kind, severe, Saint Patrick spake:
'Daughter, thy grief is wilful, and it errs;
Errs like those sad and tear-bewildered eyes
That for a Christian's take a Pagan's grave,
And for a son's a stranger's. Ah! poor child,
Thy pride it was to raise, where lay thy son,
A cross, his memory's honour. By thee close,
All dewed and glimmering in yon rising moon,
Low lies a grave unhonoured, and unknown:
No cross upon it stands; yet in its breast
Graved shalt thou find what Christian tomb ne'er lacks,
The Cross of Christ. Woman, there lies thy son.'

She rose; she found that other tomb; she knelt;

And o'er it went her wandering palms, as though
Some stone-blind mother o'er an infant's face
An agonising hand should spread, intent
To choose betwixt her own and counterfeit;
She found that cross deep-grav'n, and further sign,
Close by, to her well known. One piercing shriek—
Another moment, and her body lay
Along that grave with kisses, and wild hands
As when some forest beast tears up the ground
Seeking some prey there hidden. Then once more
Rang the wild wail above that lonely heath,
While roared far off the vast invisible woods,
And with them strove the blast, in eddies dire
Whirling both branch and bough. Through hurrying clouds,
The scared moon rushed like ship that naked glares
One moment, lightning-lighted in the storm,
Anon by wave half drowned. Hour followed hour:
Still wailed that woman, and the tempest roared;
While in the heart of ruin Patrick prayed.
He loved that woman. Unto Patrick dear,
Dear as God's Church was still the single soul,
Dearest the suffering soul. He gave her time:
He let the floods of anguish spend themselves.
But when her wail sank low; when woods lay mute,
And where the skiey madness late had raged

Shone the blue heaven, he spake with voice in strength
Gentle like that which calmed the Syrian lake:
'My sister, God hath shown me of thy wound,
And wherefore with the blind old Pagan's cry
Hopeless thou mourn'st. Returned from distant lands
Christian thou found'st thine own, and found'st the cross
On Christian graves: and ill thy heart endured
That tomb so dear should lack its reverence meet.
To him thou gav'st the cross, albeit that cross,
Inly thou know'st not yet. That knowledge thine,
Thou hadst not left thy son amerced of prayer,
And given him tears, not succour.' 'Yea,' she said,
Of this new Faith I little understand,
Being an aged woman and in woe:
But since my son was Christian, such am I;
And since the Christian tomb is decked with cross
He shall not lack his right.'

Then Patrick spake:
'O woman, hearken, for through me thy son
Invokes thee. All night long for thee, unknown,
Mine hands have risen: but thou no prayer hast raised
For him, thy dearest; nor from founts of God,
Though brimful, hast thou drawn for lips that need.
Arise, and kneel, and hear thy loved one's cry:
Too long he waiteth. Blessed are the dead:

They rest in God's high Will. But more than peace,
The rapturous vision of the Face of God,
Won by the Cross of Christ—for that they thirst
As thou, if viewless stood thy son close by,
Wouldst thirst to see His countenance. Eyes sin-scaled
Not yet their God can see. Prayer speeds the time:
The living help the dead; all praise to Him
Who blends His children in a league of help,
Nor separate makes our good. Eternal Love!
Not thine the will that love with life should cease,
Or, living, cease from service, barren made,
A stagnant gall, eating the mourner's heart
That hour when love should stretch a hand of might
Far o'er the grave. O woman, great in love,
Perfect love's work: for well, sad heart, I know,
Hadst thou not trained thy son in virtuous ways,
Christian he ne'er had been.'
Those later words
That solitary mourner understood,
The earlier but in part, and answered thus:
'A loftier cross, and farther seen, shall rise
Upon this grave new-found! No hireling hands—
Mine own shall raise it; yea, though thirty years
Should sweat beneath the task.' And Patrick said:
'What means the Cross?' That lore thou lack'st. Now learn.'

Then that which Kings desired to know, and seers
And prophets vigil-blind—that Crown of Truths,
Scandal of fools, and conqueror of the world,
To her, that midnight mourner, he divulged,
Record authentic: how in sorrow and sin
Had groaned the earth; how pity, like a sword,
Had pierced the great Paternal Heart in heaven;
How He, the Light of Light, and God of God,
Had man become, and died upon the Cross,
Vanquishing thus both sorrow and sin, and risen,
The might of death o'erthrown; and how the gates
Of heaven rolled inwards as the Anointed King
Resurgent and ascending through them passed
In triumph with His Holy Dead; and how
The just, henceforth, death-freed, the self-same gates
Entering, the everlasting throne shall share.
Thus Patrick spake, and many a stately theme
Rehearsed beside, higher than heaven, and yet
Near as the farthest can alone be near.
Then in that grief-worn creature's bosom old
Contentions rose, and fiercer fires than burn
In sultry breast of youth: and all her past,
Both good and evil, woke, in sleep long sealed;
And all the powers and forces of her soul
Rushed every way through darkness seeking light,
Like winds or tides. Beside her Patrick prayed,

And mightier than his preaching was his prayer,
Sheltering that crisis dread. At last beneath
The great Life-Giver's breath that Human Soul
(An inner world vaster than planet worlds)
In undulation swayed as when of old
The Spirit of God above the waters moved
Creative, while the blind and shapeless void
Yearned unto form, and form grew meet for life;
And downward through the abysses Law ran forth
With touch soul-soft, and seas from lands retired,
And light from dark, and wondering Nature passed
Through storm to calm, and all things found their home.

Silence long time endured; at last, clear-voiced,
Her head not turning, thus the woman spake:
'That God who Man became—who died, and lives,—
Say, died he for my son?' And Patrick said,
'Yea, for thy son He died. Kneel, woman, kneel!
Nor doubt, for mighty is a mother's prayer,
That He who in the eternal light is throned,
Lifting the roseate and the nail-pierced palm,
Will make in heaven the Venerable Sign
(For He it is prays in us), and that Soul
Thou lov'st pass on to glory.'
At his word
She knelt, and unto God, with help of God,

Uprushed the strength of prayer, as when the cloud
Uprushes past some beetling mountain wall
From billowy deep unseen. Long time she prayed;
While heaven and earth grew silent as that night
When rose the Saviour. Sudden ceased the prayer:
Then rang upon the night her jubilant cry,
'I saw a Sign in Heaven. Far inward rolled
The gates; and glory flashed from God; and he
I love his entrance won.' Then, fair and tall,
The dusky shadow of her youth renewed,
That woman stood, with hands upraised to heaven:
And Patrick instant spake, 'Give thanks to God,
And speed thee home; and sleep: and since thy son
No children left, two orphans take to thee,
And rear them, in his honour, unto Christ;
And yearly, when the death-day of thy son
Returns, his birth-day name it; call thy friends;
Give alms; and range the poor around thy door,
So shall they feast, and pray. Woman, farewell:
All night the dark upon thy face hath lain;
Yet shall we know each other, met in heaven.'

Then blithe of foot that mother crossed the moor;
And when her door she reached, a zone of white
Loosening along the dusky-vested dawn
Revealed a widening light. That light ere long

Lay, unawakening, on a face serene,
On tearless lids, and quiet, open palms,
On stormless couch and raiment calm that hid
A breast if faded now, yet happier far
Than when in prime its youthful wave had heaved
Rocking a sleeping Infant.

SAINT PATRICK AND OISÍN. II.

THE DEATH OF OSCAR.

'Sing us once more of Gahbra's fight,
Old bard, that fight where fell thy son:'
Thus Patrick spake to vexed Oisín,
And the old man's wrath was gone.

'Thou of the crosier white! whoe'er
Had seen that plain with carnage spread,
Or friend or foe, had wept for Eire,
And for her princes dead!

'There lay the arms of mighty chiefs;
There kings in death with helms unbound.
A field of doom it was; a place
By deadly spells girt round!

'Upon his left hand leaned my son:
His shield lay broken by his side:
His right hand clutched his sword: the blood
Rushed from him like a tide.

'I stayed my spear-shaft on the ground:
O'er him I stooped on bended knee:
On me my Oscar turned his eyes:
He stretched his hands to me.

'To me my Oscar spake—my son—
The dying man, and all but dead:
"Thou liv'st! For this I thank the Gods,
O father!" thus he said.

'"Rememberest thou that day we fought
Far westward at the Sith of Mor?"
Caoilte spake: "I healed thee then,
Though deep thy wounds and sore:—

'"No cure there lives for wounds like these."'
Here ceased the lamentable sound.
Five steps the old man moved apart;
Then dashed him on the ground.

'My Oscar stared upon his wounds;
To fields long past his thoughts took flight:
"My son," I cried, "thou hadst not died
If Fionn had ruled the fight!"

'O Patrick ! I have sung thee lays,
Emprize of others, or my own ;
Where he was bravest, all were brave ;
But his, and his alone,

'The gracious ways, the voice that smiled,
The heart so loving and so strong :
The women laughed my harp to hear ;
They wept at Oscar's song !

'All night we watched the dying man :
To staunch his blood we strove in vain :
We heard the demon-loaded wind
Along the mountain strain.

'All night we propped him with our spears :
To staunch his blood we strove in vain :
Till, drenched in falling floods, the moon
Went down beyond the plain.

'Alas ! the dawning of that morn,
My Oscar's last ! With barren glare
It flashed along the broken arms,
And the red pools here and there.

Then saw we, pacing from afar,
A kingly form, a shape of woe:
King Fionn it was that toward us moved
With measured footsteps slow:

'King Fionn himself; and far behind
Came many warriors more of Fail,
Down-gazing on Baoignè's clan,
Death-cold, and still, and pale.

'There lay all dumb the men of might;
There, foot to foot, the foemen, strewn
Like seaweed lines on stormy shores,
Or forests overblown!

'Oh! then to hear that cry far borne
On gales new-touched with morning frost!
As though he heard it not, the King
Came, striding o'er that host,

'Seeking the bodies of his sons.
So on he strode through fog and mist;
And we to meet him moved; for now
That Fionn it was we wist.

'"All hail to thee, King Fionn! all hail!"
He answered naught, but onward passed
Until he reached that spot where lay
My Oscar sinking fast.

'"Late, late thou com'st: yet thou art here."
Then answered Fionn, "Alas the day!
My reign is done since thou art gone,
And all this host is clay."

'My Oscar gazed upon his face:
He heard the words his grandsire said:
He heard, nor spake: his hand down fell
And his great spirit fled.

'Then all the warriors, far and near,
Save one that wept, and Fionn, my sire,
Three times upraised a cry that rang
O'er all the land of Eire.

'Fionn turned from us his face that hour:
We knew that tears adown it crept:
Never, except for Bran his hound,
The King till then had wept.

'He shed no tear above his son;
Tearless he saw his brother die:
He wept to see my Oscar dead,
And the warriors weeping nigh.

'This is the tale of Gahbra's fight,
Where all the monarchs warred on one;
Where they that wrecked him shared his fate,
And Erin's day was done.

'On Gahbra's field the curse came down:
Our voice is changed from that of men:
We sigh by night; we sigh by day:
We learned that lesson then.

'Oh! many a prince was laid that day
In narrow cairn and lonely cave;
But all the far-famed Rath thenceforth
Became my Oscar's grave.

'Patrick, I pray the Lord of Life—
Patrick, do thou his grace implore—
That death may still my heart ere long:
This night my pain is sore.'

SAINT PATRICK AT THE FEAST OF KNOCK CAE;

OR, THE FOUNDING OF MUNGRET.

In Luimneach, ere he reached it, fame there rán
Of Patrick's words and works. Before his feet
Ailill had fallen, loud wailing, with his wife,
And cried, 'Our child by savage beasts is slain:
But thou, O prophet, if that God thou serv'st
Be God, to life restore him.' Patrick turned
To Malach, praised of all men. 'Brother, kneel,
And raise yon child.' But Malach answered, 'Nay,
Lest, tempting God, His service I should shame.'
Then Patrick, 'Answer of the base is thine;
And base shall be that house thou build'st on earth,
Little, and low. A man may fail in prayer:
What then? Thank God! the fault is ours, not His,
And ours alone the shame.' The Apostle turned
To Ibar, and to Ailbhè, bishops twain,
And bade them raise the child. They heard and knelt;
And Patrick knelt between them: and these three

Upheaved a mighty strength of prayer; and lo!
All pale, yet shining, rose the child, and sat,
Lifting small hands, and to the people preached,
And straightway they believed, and were baptized.

Thus with loud rumour all the land was full,
And some believed; some doubted; and a chief,
Lonan, the son of Eirc, that half believed,
Willing to draw from Patrick wondrous sign,
By messengers besought him, saying, 'Come,
For in thy reverence waits thy servant's feast
Spread on Knock Cae.' That pleasant hill ascends
Westward of Ara, girt by rivers twain,
Maigue, lily-lighted, and the 'morning star,'
Once 'Samhair' named, that eastward through the woods
Winding, upon its rapids earliest meets
The morn, and flings it far o'er mead and plain.

From Luimneach therefore Patrick, while the dawn
Still dusk its joyous secret kept, went forth
O'er dustless road soon lost in dewy fields,
And groves that, touched by wakening winds, began
To load damp airs with scent. That time it was
When beach leaves lose their silken gloss, and maids
From whitest brows depose the hawthorn white,
In place the rose enthroning. Earliest gleams

Glimmered on leaves that shook like wings of birds:
Saint Patrick marked them well. To Fiacc he turned—
'God might have changed to Pentecostal tongues
The leaves of all the forests in the world,
And bade them sing His love. He wrought not thus:
A little hint He gives us and no more.
Alone the willing see. Thus sin they less,
Who, if they saw, seeing would disbelieve.
Hark to that note! Oh foolish woodland choirs!
Ye sing but idle loves: and, idler yet,
The bards sing war—war only!'
Answered thus
The monk bard-loving: 'Sing it! Aye, and make!
The keys of all the tempests hang on zones
Of those cloud-spirits! 'Tis theirs to bind and loose.
A bard incensed hath proved a kingdom's doom!
Such Aidan. Upon cakes of meal his host,
King Aileach, fed him in a cheerless hall:
He nought complained; but issuing forth ere morn
Sang in dark wood a keen and venomed song
That raised on the King's countenance death-spots three;
Who saw him named them Scorn, Dishonour, Shame,
And blighted the three oak trees nigh his door.
What next? Before a month that realm in blood
Lay drowned: and fire went o'er the opprobrious house!'
Thus spake the youth, and blushed at his own zeal

For bardic fame; then added, "Strange the power
Of song! My father, do I vainly dream
Oft thinking that the bards, perchance the birds,
Sing something vaster than they think or know?
Some fire immortal lives within their strings:
Therefore the people love them. War divine,
God's war on sin—true love-song, best and sweetest—
Perforce they chaunt in spirit, not wars of clans;
And one day, conscious, they shall sing that song:
One day by river clear of south or north,
Pagan no more, the laurelled head shall rise,
And chaunt the Warfare of the Realm of Souls,
The anguish and the cleansing, and the crown,
Prelude of songs celestial!
Patrick smiled:
'Still, as at first, a lover of the bards!
Hard task was mine to win thee to the cowl!
Dubtach, thy master, sole in Tara's hall
Who reverence made me, mocked my quest. He said,
"Fiacc thou wouldst have? my Fiacc? Few days gone by
I sent the boy with poems to the Kings.
He loves me: hardly will he leave the songs
To wear thy tonsure!" As he spake, behold,
Thou enter'dst. Sudden hands on Dubtach's head
I laid, as though to gird with tonsure crown:

Then rose thy clamour, 'Erin's chief of bards
A tonsured man! Me, father, take, not him;
Far less the loss to Erin and the songs!'
Down knelt'st thou; and, ere long, old Dubtach's floor
Shone with thy vernal locks, like forest paths
Made gold by leaves of autumn. Holy hymns
Quenched soon thy songs of battle.'
As he spake,
The sun, new-risen, flashed on a breast of wood
That answered from a thousand jubilant throats:
Then Fiacc with all their music in his face
Resumed, 'My father, upon Tara's steep
Patient thou sat'st whole months, the laws of Eire
Deep-sifting, and recasting for all time,
Ill laws from good dissevering, as That Day
Shall sever tares from wheat. I see thee still,
As then we saw—thy clenched hand, lost in beard,
Propping thy chin; thy forehead wrinkle-trenched
Above that wondrous tome, thy 'Senchus Mohr,'
Like his, that Hebrew lawgiver's, who sat
Throned on the clouded Mount, while far below
Waited in awe the Tribes. Now answer make!
Three bishops, and three brehons, and three kings,
Ye toiled—who helped thee best?' 'Dubtach, the bard,'
Patrick replied: 'yea, wise was he, and knew
Man's heart like his own harpstrings.' 'All are wise,'

Shouted the younger, 'save that war they wage
On thee, the wisest. In their music bath
Cleanse they man's heart, not less, and thus thy way,
Though hating thee, prepare. The bards are wise
For all except themselves. Shall God not save them,
He who would all men save? Such grace were hard
Unless, death past, their souls to birds might change,
And, in the darksomest grove of Paradise,
Lament, amerced, their error, yet rejoice
In them that walked obedient!' 'Darksomest grove,'
Patrick made answer; 'darksome is their life;
Darksome their pride, their love, their joys, their hopes;
Darksome, though gleams of happier lore they have,
Their light itself! Seest thou yon forest floor,
And the ivy's flash—earth-light? Such light is theirs:
By such can no man walk.'

Thus, gay or grave,
Conversed they, while the Brethren paced behind;
Till now the morn crowded each cottage door
With clustered heads. A hamlet in the woods
Soon reached they. Here, upon the weedy thatch
White fruit-bloom fell: through shadow, there, went round
The swinging mill-wheel tagged with silver fringe:
Here rang the mallet: there was heard remote
The one note of the love-contented bird.

Though warm the sun, in shade the young spring morn
Was edged with winter yet, and icy film
Glazed the deep ruts. The swarthy smith worked hard,
And working sang; the wheelwright toiled close by;
An armourer next to these: through flaming smoke
Glared the fierce hands that on the anvil fell
In thunder down. A sorcerer stood apart
Kneading Death's messenger, that missile ball,
The *Lia Laimbhè*. To his heart close clasped
O'er it he muttered spells with flatteries mixt:
'Hail, little daughter mine! 'Twixt hand and heart
I knead thee! From the Red Sea came that sand
Which, blent with viper's poison, makes thy flesh!
Be thou no shadow wandering on the air!
Rush through the battle gloom as red-combed snake
Cleaves the blind waters! On! like Witch's glance,
Or forkèd flash, or shaft of summer pest,
And woe to him that meets thee! Mouth blood-red
My daughter hath:—not healing be her kiss!'
Thus he. In shade he stood, and phrensy-fired;
And yet he marked who watched him. Without word
Him Patrick passed; but spake to all the rest
With voice so kindly reverent, 'Is not this,'
Men asked, 'the preacher of the "Tidings Good"?'
'What tidings? Has he found a mine?' 'He speaks
To princes as to brothers; to the hind

As we to princes' children! Yea, when mute,
Saith not his face "rejoice"?'
At times the Saint
Laid on the head of age his strong right hand,
Gentle as touch of soft-accosting eyes;
And once before an open door he stopped,
Silent. Within, all glowing like a rose,
A mother stood for pleasure of her babes
That—in them still the warmth of couch late left—
Around her gambolled. On his face, as hers,
Their sport regarding, long time lay the smile:
Then crept a shadow o'er it, and he spake
In sadness: 'Woman! when a hundred years
Have passed, with opening flower and falling snow,
Where then will be thy children?' Like a cloud
Fear and great wrath fell on her. From the wall
A battle-axe she caught, and in both hands
High raised it, crying, 'Wouldst thou slay my babes?'
He answered, 'I would save them. Woman, hear!
Seest thou yon floating shape? A worm it died:
It lives, the blue-winged angel of spring meads.
Thy children, likewise, if they serve my King,
Death past, shall find them wings.' Then to her cheek
The bloom returned, and splendour to her eye;
And catching to her breast that larger swelled
A child, she wept, 'Oh, would that he might live

For ever! Prophet, speak! thy words are good!
Their father, too, must hear thee.' Patrick said,
'Not so; nor falls this seed on every road;'
Then added thus: 'Yon child, by all the rest
Cherished as though some infant God he were,
Is none of thine.' She answered, 'None of ours;
A great chief sent him here for fosterage.'
Then he: 'All men on earth the children are
Of One who keeps them here in fosterage:
They see not yet His face; but He sees them,
And hath decreed their seasons and their times:
Like infants, they must learn Him first by touch,
Through nature, and her gifts—by hearing next,
The hearing of the ear, and faith therein—
By vision last. Woman, these things are hard;
But thou to Luimneach come in three days' time,
Likewise thy husband; there, by Sangul's Well,
All shalt thou know.'

Ere long that festal mount
They reached. Long companies with bannered line
Its slope ascended. Never favourite lamb
In ribands decked shone brighter than that hour
The fair flank of Knock Cae. Heath-scented airs
Lightened the clambering toil. At times the Saint
Stayed on their course the crowds, and towards the Truth
Drew them by parable, or record old,

Oftener by question sage. Not all believed.
Of such was Derball. Man of wealth and wit,
Nor wise, nor warlike, toward the Saint he strode
With bubble-seething brain, and head high tossed,
And cried, 'Great Seer! remove yon mountain blue,
'Cenn Abhrat, by thy prayer! That done, to thee
Fealty I pledge.' Saint Patrick knelt in prayer:
Soon Derball cried, 'The central ridge descends;—
Southward, beyond it, Lunga's lake shines out
In sunlight flashing!' At his word drew near
The men of Eire. Then Derball homeward turned,
Mocking: 'Believe who will, believe not I!
Me more imports it o'er my foodful fields
To draw the Maigue's rich waters than to stare
At moving hills.' But certain of that throng,
Light men, obsequious unto Derball's laugh,
Of Patrick questioned if the mountain moved.
He answered, 'On the ground mine eyes were fixed;
Nought saw I. Haply, through defect of mine,
It moved not. Derball said the mountain moved;
Yet kept he not his pledge, but disbelieved.
"Faith can move mountains." Never said my King,
That mountains moved could move reluctant faith
In unbelieving heart.' With sad, calm voice
He spake; and Derball's laughter frustrate died.

Meantime, high up on that thyme-scented hill
By shadows swept, and lights, and rapturous winds,
Lonan the feast prepared, and, with the chief,
Mantan, a deacon. Tables fair were spread;
And tents with branches gay. Beside those tents
Stood the sweet-breathing, mournful, dark-eyed kine
With hazel-shielded horns, and gave their milk
To merry maidens. Half way down the sun
Had fallen, when, Patrick near the summit now,
Upon him burst a wandering troop, wild-eyed,
With scant and quaint array. O'er sunburnt brows
Sere wreaths they wore; their piebald vests were stained,
And lean their looks, and sad. Some piped, some sang,
Some tossed the juggler's ball. 'From far we came,'
They cried; 'we faint with hunger, give us food!'
Upon them Patrick bent a pitying eye,
And said, 'Where Lonan and where Mantan toil
Go ye, and pray them, for mine honour's sake,
To gladden you with meat.' But Lonan said,
And Mantan, 'Nay, but when the feast is o'er,
The fragments shall be yours.' With darkening brow
The Saint of that denial heard, and cried,
'He cometh from the North, even now he cometh,
For whom the Blessing is reserved; he cometh
Bearing a little wether at his back.'

And, straightway, through the thicket evening-dazed
A shepherd—by him walked his mother—pushed,
Bearing a little wether. Patrick said,
'Give them to eat. They hunger.' Gladly then,
That shepherd youth the little wether gave.
With both his hands outstretched, and liberal smile,
He gave it, though, with eye askance, that grace
His aged mother grudged. The wether theirs,
As though earth-swallowed, vanished that wild tribe,
Fearing that mother's eye.
Then Patrick spake
To Lonan, 'Zealous is thy service, friend;
Yet of thy house no King shall sit on throne,
No Bishop bless the people.' Turning then
To Mantan, thus he spake, 'Of many things
Careful art thou; not less that church thou raisest
Shall not be of the honoured in the land;
And in its chancel waste the mountain kine
Above thy grave shall couch.' To Nessan last
Thus spake he: 'Thou that didst the hungry feed,
The poor of Christ, that know not yet His name,
And, helping them that cried to me for help,
Mine honour cherish, like a palm, one day,
Shall rise thy greatness.' Nessan's mother old
For pardon knelt. He blessed her hoary head,
Yet added, mournful, 'Not within the Church

That Nessan serves shall be his mother's grave.'
Then Nessan he baptized, and on him bound
Ere long the deacon's grade, and o'er his church
At Mungret, later placed him. Centuries ten
It stood, a convent round it as a star
Forth sending beams of glory and of grace
O'er woods Teutonic and the Tyrrhene Sea.
Yet Nessan's mother in her son's great church
Slept not; nor where the mass bell tinkled low:
West of the church her grave, to his—her son's—
Close joined, yet severed by the chancel wall.

Thus from the morning star to evening star
Went by that day. In Erin many such
Saint Patrick lived, using well pleased the chance,
Or great or small, since all things come from God.
And well the people loved him, being one
Who sat amid their marriage feasts, and saw,
Where sin was not, in all things beauty and love.
But, ere he passed from Munster, longing fell
Sudden on Patrick in its breadth to view
Her river-flood, and bless its western waves;
Therefore, forth journeying, to that Hill he went,
Highest among the wave-girt, heathy hills,
That still his name sustains, and saw the flood
At widest stretched, and that green Isle hard by,

And northern Thomond. From its coasts her sons
Rushed countless forth in skiff and coracle
Smiting blue wave to white, and Sheenan's sound
Was in their clamour lost. Then fell from God
Power upon Patrick; and in spirit he saw,
Invisible to flesh, that river's mouth,
And the ocean way, and, far beyond, that land
The Future's heritage, and prophesied
Of Brendan that ere long in wicker boat
Should over-ride the mountains of the deep,
Shielded by God, and tread—no fable then—
Fabled Hesperia of the Grecian bards;
And him, the hermit saint, Senanus;—'Hail,
Isle of blue ocean and the river's mouth!
The People's Lamp, their Counsel's Head, is thine!'
That hour shone out through cloud the westering sun,
And sunset paved with fire the wave: that hour,
Strong in his God, westward his face he set,
Westward and north, and spread his arms abroad,
And drew the blessing down, and flung it far:
'A blessing on the warriors, and the clans,
A blessing on high field, and golden vale,
On sea-like plain and on the showery ridge,
On river-ripple, cliff, and murmuring deep,
On seaward peaks, harbours, and towns, and ports;

A blessing on the sand beneath the ships:—
On all descend the blessing!' Thus he prayed,
Great-hearted; and from all the echoing hills
And waters came the people's vast 'Amen!'

SAINT PATRICK AND OISÍN. III.

OISIN'S YOUTH.

'PATRICK! thy priests do ill to jeer,
Not me, but Oscar's self, and Fionn:
Wise are they; but the dead are dear:
This deed is not well done.

'Who dares to say the King lies bound
By angel hosts in bonds abhorred?
Had these lain bound, great Fionn had found
And freed them with his sword!

'Had Fionn but heard thine Eve lament
The apple stol'n—the curse on men—
For *eric* apples he had sent,
Shiploads threescore and ten!

'Likewise that Serpent slain had he!
Fionn ever said this way was best,
To kill the bad that killed should be,
And be loving to the rest.

'Patrick, a pact with thee I make:
Because my warriors they deride,
With thee to heaven my father take,
And leave thy priests outside!

'Patrick, this other boon I crave,
That I to thee in heaven may sing
Full loud the glories of the brave,
And Fionn, my sire and King!'

'Oisìn, in heaven the praises swell
To God alone from Soul and Saint:—'
'Then, Patrick, I their deeds will tell
In a little whisper faint!

'Who says that Fionn his sentence waits
In some dark realm, the thrall of sin?
Fionn would have burst that kingdom's gates,
Or ruled himself therein!'

'Old man, for once thy chiefs forget'
(Thus oft the Saint his rage beguiled):
'Sing us thine own glad youth, while yet
A stripling, or a child.'

'O Patrick, glad that time and dear!
It wrought no greatness, gained no gain;
Not less those things that thou wouldst hear
Thou shalt not seek in vain.

'My mother was a princess, turned
By magic to a milk-white doe:—
Such tale, a wondering child, I learned.
True was it? Who can know?

'I know but this, that, yet a boy,
I raced beside her like the wind:
We heard the hunter's horn with joy,
And left the pack behind.

'A strength was mine that knew no bound,
A witless strength that nothing planned:
When came the hour, the deed I found
Scarce sought for in my hand.

'Forth from a cave I stept at Beigh:
O'er ivied cliffs the loose clouds rushed:
With them I raced, and reached ere they
The loud seas sandhill-hushed.

'By Brandon's cliff an eagle brown
O'erhung our wave-borne coracle:
I hurled at him my lance, and down
Like falling stars he fell.

'On that green shore of Ardrakese
An untamed horse I made my slave,
And forced him far o'er heaving seas,
And reinless rode the wave.

'Methinks my brow I might have laid
Against a bull's, and there and then
Backward have pushed him up the glade,
And down the rocky glen!

'So ran my youth through dark and bright
In deeds half jest. Their time is gone:
The glorious works of thoughtful might
For Oscar were and Fionn.

'When met the hosts in mirth I fought:
My war-fields still with revel rang:
My sword with such a God was fraught
That while it smote it sang.

'My spear, unbidden, to my hand
Leaped, hawk-wise, for the battle's sake:
Forth launched, it flashed along the land
With music in its wake.

'A shield I bore so charged and stored
With rage and yearnings for the fight,
When foes drew near it shook, and roared
Like breakers in the night:

'But when at last the iron feast
Of war its hungry heart had stilled,
It murmured like a whispering priest
Or frothing pail new-filled.'

'Say, knew'st thou never fear or awe?'
Thus Patrick; and the Bard replied,
'Yea, once: for once a man I saw
Who—not in battle—died.

'I sang the things I loved—the fight—
The chance inspired that all decides;
That pause of death, when Fate and Flight
Drag back the battle tides:

'The swords that blent their lightnings blue;
The midnight march; the city's sack;
The advancing ridge of spears that threw
The levelled sunrise back.

'And yet my harp could still the storm,
Redeem the babe from magic blight,
Restore to human heart and form
The unhappy spell-bound knight.

'And some could hear a sobbing hind
Among my chords; and some would swear
They heard that kiss of branch and wind
That lulled the wild-deer's lair!

'I sang not lies: where base men thronged
I sat not, neither harped for gold:
My song no generous foeman wronged,
No woman's secret told.

'I sang among the sea-side flocks
When sunset flushed the bowery spray,
Or when the white moon scaled the rocks
And glared upon the bay.

'My stately music I rehearsed
On shadowing cliffs, when, far below,
In rolled the moon-necked wave, and burst,
And changed black shores to snow.

'But now I tread a darker brink:
Far down, unfriendlier waters moan:
And now of vanished times I think;
Now of that bourn unknown.

'I strike my harp; I make good cheer;
Yet scarce myself can catch its sound:
I see but shadows bending near
When feasters press around.

'Say, Patrick of the mystic lore,
Shall I, when this old head lies low,
My Oscar see, and Fionn, once more,
And run beside that Doe?'

SAINT PATRICK AND KING EOCHAIDH.

EOCHAIDH, son of Cruimther, reigned, a King
Northward in Clochar.. Dearer to his heart
Than kingdom or than people or than life
Was he, the boy long wished for. Dear was she,
Keinè, his daughter. Babyhood's white star,
Beauteous in childhood, now in maiden dawn
She witched the world with beauty. From her eyes
A light went forth like morning o'er the sea ;
Sweeter her voice than wind on harp ; her smile
Could stay men's breath. With wingèd feet she trod
The yearning earth that, if it could, like waves
Had swelled to meet their pressure. Ah, the pang!
Beauty, the immortal promise, like a cheat
Passes with time into the shadow land,
If childless, twice defeated.. Beauty wed
To mate unworthy, suffers worse eclipse—
'Ill choice between two ills!' thus spleenful cried

Eochaidh; but not his the pensive grief.
He would have kept his daughter in his house
For ever; yet, since better might not be,
Himself he chose her out a mate, and frowned,
And said, 'The dog must have her.' But the maid
Wished not for marriage. Tender was her heart;
Yet though her twentieth year had o'er her flown,
And though her tears had dewed a mother's grave,
In her there lurked, not flower of womanhood,
But flower of angel texture. All around
To her was love. The crown of earthly love
Seemed but its crown of mockery. Love Divine—
For that she yearned, and yet she knew it not;
Knew less that love she feared.

In woods she walked
While all the green leaves, drenched by sunset's gold,
Upon a shower-bespangled sycamore
Shivered, and birds among them choir on choir
Chanted her praise—or spring's. 'Ill sung,' she laughed,
'My dainty minstrels! Grant to me your wings,
And I for them will teach you song of mine:—
Listen!' A carol from her lip there gushed
That, ere its time, from winter's coldest cave
Might well have called the spring. It ceased: she turned:
Beside her Patrick stood. His hand he raised
To bless her. Awed though glad, upon her knees

The maiden sank. His eye, as if through air,
Saw through that stainless soul, and, crystal-shrined
Therein, its inmate, Truth. That other Truth
Instant to her he preached—the Truth Divine—.
(For whence is caution needful, but from sin?)
And those two Truths, each gazing upon each,
Embraced like sisters, thenceforth one. For her
No arduous thing was Faith, ere yet she heard
In heart believing: and, as when a babe
Marks some bright shape, if near or far, unknown,
And stretches forth a witless hand to clasp
Phantom or form, even so with wild surmise
And guesses erring first, and questions apt,
She chased the flying light, and round it closed
At last, and substance found it. 'This is He,'
Then cried she, 'this, whom every maid should love,
Conqueror self-sacrificed of sin and death:
How shall we find, how please Him, how be nigh?'
Patrick made answer: 'They that do His Will
Are nigh Him.' And the virgin: 'Of the nigh,
Say, who is nighest?' Thus, that winged heart
Rushed to its rest. He answered: 'Nighest they
Who offer most to Him in sacrifice,
As when the wedded leaves her father's house
And cleaveth to her husband. Nighest they
Who neither father's house nor husband's house

Desire, but live with Him in endless prayer,
And tend Him in His poor.' Aloud she cried,
'The nearest to the Highest, this is love;—
Such bridal lot I choose.' He answered 'Child,
The choice is God's. For each, that lot is best
To which He calls us.' Lifting then pure hands,
Thus wept the maiden: 'Call me, Virgin-born!
Will not the Mother-Maid permit a maid
To sit beside those nail-pierced feet, and wipe
With hair untouched by wreaths of mortal love,
The dolorous blood-stains from them? Stranger guest,
Come to my father's tower! Against my will,
Against his own, in bridal bonds he binds me:
My suit resist he might: he cannot thine!'

She spake; and by her Patrick paced with feet
To hers accordant. Soon they reached that fort.
Central within a circling rath earth-built
It stood; the western towers of stone; the rest,
Not high, but spreading wide, of wood compact;
For thither many a forest hill had sent
His wind-accustomed daughters, converse old
With cloud and dews relinquishing thenceforth
To echo back the revels of a King.
Mosaic was the work, beam laced with beam
In quaint device: high up, o'er many a door

Shone blazon rich of vermeil, or of green,
Or shield of bronze, glittering with veinèd boss,
Chalcedony or agate, or whate'er
The wave-lipped marge of Neagh's broad lake might boast,
Or ocean's shore, northward from Brandon's Head
To where the myriad-pillared cliffs hang forth
Their stony organs o'er the lonely main,
And trembles yet the pilgrim, noting at eve
The pride Fomorian, and that Giant Way [1]
Trending toward eastern Alba. From his throne
Above the semicirque of grassy seats
Whereon by Brehons and by Ollambs girt
Daily he judged his people, rose the King
And bade the stranger welcome.

Day to day
And night to night succeeded. In fit time
(For Patrick, sometimes sudden, oft was slow)
The Apostle of the Lord to King and court
Proclaimed his Master's message. At the close,
As though in trance, the warriors circling stood
With hands outstretched; the Druids downward frowned,
Silent; and like a strong man awed for once,
Eochaidh round him stared. A little while,
And from him passed the amazement. Buoyant once more,
And bright like trees fresher for thunder-shower,

[1] The Giant's Causeway.

With all his wonted aspect, bold and keen,
He answered: 'O my prophet, words, words, words!
We too have Prophets. Better thrice our Bards:
Yet, being no better than a trumpet's blast,
The trumpet more I prize. Had words been work,
Myself in youth had led the loud-voiced clan.
Deeds I preferred. What profit e'er had I
From windy marvels? Once with me in war
A seer there camped that, bending back his head
(Fit rites performed), and upward gazing, blew
With rounded lips into the heaven of heavens
Druidic breath. To cloud that heaven was changed,
Cloud that on borne to Claire's hated bound
Down fell, a rain of blood. To me what gain?
Within three weeks my son was trapped and snared
By Aodh of Hy Brinin, him whose hosts
Number my warriors fourfold. Three long years
Beyond those purple mountains in the west
Hostage he lies.' Lightly Eochaidh spoke.
And turned; but shaken chin that grief betrayed
Which lived beneath his lightness.

Sudden thronged
High on the neighbouring hills a jubilant troop,
Their banners waving, while with horn and harp
The midway vale resounded. Patrick spake:
'Rejoice! thy son returns! not sole he comes,

But in his hand a princess, fair and good,
A kingdom for her dowry. Aodh's realm,
By me late left, welcomed with loyal joy
The tidings of deliverance. Near and far
All fire the mountains shone. "The God I serve,"
Thus spake I, Aodh pointing to those fires,
"In mountains of rejoicing hath no joy,
While sad beyond them sits a childless man,
His only son thy captive. Captive groaned
Man's race; the Babe of Bethlehem freed the slave.
Thy thrall for His sake loose!" A sweeter voice
Pleaded with mine, his daughter's, 'mid her tears.
"Aodh," I said, "these two each other love!
What think'st thou? He who shaped the linnet's nest,
Indifferent unto Him are human loves?
Arise! thy work make perfect! Righteous deeds
Are easier whole than half." In thought awhile
Old Aodh sat; then to his daughter turned,
And thus, imperious even in kindness, spake;
"Well fought the youth ere captured, like the son
Of Kings, and worthy to be sire of Kings:
Wed him this hour; and in three days, at eve,
Restore him to his father!" King, thou know'st
Henceforth, if empty words that faith I preach.
Or truth, and armed with power.'

That night was passed
In feasting and in revel, high and low
The common joy partaking. Many a torch
Flared in the hand of servitors hill-sent,
That standing, each behind a guest, retained
Beneath that roof clouded by banquet steam
Their mountain wildness. Here, the splendour glanced
On goblet jewel-chased and dark with wine,
Swift circling; there, on walls with antlers spread,
And rich with yew-wood carvings, flower or bud,
Or clustered grape pendent in russet gleam
As though from nature's hand. A hall hard by
Echoed the harp that now nor rage invoked,
Nor grief condoled, nor sealed with slumber's balm
Tempestuous spirits, triumphs three of song,
But raised to rapture, mirth. Far spread that hall
Glowing with hangings steeped in every tinct
The boast of Erin's dyeing-vats, now plain,
Now prank'd with bird or beast or fish (whate'er
Fast-flying shuttle from the craftsman's thought
Catching, on bore through glimmering warp and woof,
A marvellous work), or traced by broiderer's hand
With legends of Ferdiadh and of Meave,
Even to the golden fringe. The warriors paced
Exulting. Oft their merit's prize they showed,
Poniard or cup, tribute ordained of tribes

From age to age, Eochaidh's right, to them
With equal right devolving. On they moved
In mantle now of crimson, now of blue,
Clasped with huge torque of silver or of gold
Just where across the snowy shirt there strayed
Tendril of purple thread. With jewell'd fronts,
Beauteous in pride 'mid light of winsome smiles,
Over the rushes green with slender foot
In silver slipper hid the ladies passed,
Answering with eyes not lips the whispered praise,
Or loud the bride extolling—'When was seen
Such sweetness and such grace?'
Meantime the King
With Patrick spake. Displeased he heard announced
His daughter's high resolve: but still his looks
Went wandering to his son. 'My boy! Behold him!
His valour and his gifts are all from me:
My first-born!' From the dancing throng apart
His daughter stood the while serene and pale,
Down-gazing on that lily in her hand
With face of one who notes not shapes around,
But dreams some happy dream. The King drew nigh,
And on her golden head the sceptre staff
Leaning, but not to hurt her, thus began:
'Your prophets of the day, I trust them not!
If sent from God, why came they not long since?

Our Druids came before them, and, belike,
Shall after them abide! With these new seers
Patrick I count not. Things that Patrick says
I ofttimes thought. His lineage too is old—
Wide-browed, grey-eyed, with downward lessening face,
Not like your baser breeds, with eyes of earth
And jaw of dog. But for thy Heavenly Spouse,
I like not Him! At least wed Cormac first!
If rude his ways, yet noble is his name,
And being poor the man with me will bide:
He's brave, and haply soon in fight may fall!
When Cormac dies—' the music, as he spake,
Forth bursting drowned his words.

A week passed by:

To Patrick, then preparing to depart,
Thus spake Eochaidh in the ears of all:
'Herald Heaven-missioned of the Tidings Good!
Those tidings I have pondered. They are true.
I for that truth's sake, and in honour bound
By reason of my son set free, resolve
The same, upon conditions, to believe,
And suffer all my people to believe,
Just terms exacted. Briefly these they are:
First, after death, admittance frank I crave
Into thy Heavenly Kingdom: next, till death
For me exemption from that Baptism Rite,

Imposed on kerne and hind. Experience-taught,
I love not rigid bond and written pledge.
'Tis well to brand your mark on sheep or lamb:
Kings are of lion breed; and of my house
'Tis known there never yet was King baptized.
This pact concluded, preach within my realm
Thy Faith; and wed my daughter to thy God.
Not scholarly am I to know what joy
A maid can find in psalm, and cell, and spouse
Unseen: yet ever thus my sentence stood,
"Choose each his way." My son restored, her loss
To me is loss the less.' Thus spake the King.

Then Patrick, on whose face the princess bent
The supplication softly strong of eyes
Like planets seen through mist, Eochaidh's heart
Knowing, which miracle had hardened more,
Made answer, 'King, a man of jests art thou,
Entrance to heaven demanding, yet the gate
Thyself close barring! In thy daughter's prayers
Belike thou trustest, that where others creep
Thou shalt the golden bastions over-fly.
Far otherwise than in that way thou weet'st,
That daughter's prayers shall speed thee. With thy word
I close, that word to frustrate. God be with thee!
Thou living, I return not. Fare thee well.'

Thus speaking, by the hand he took the maid,
And led her through the concourse. At her feet
Low fell the poor, kissing her garment's hem,
And many brought their gifts, and all their prayers,
And old men wept. A maiden train snow-garbed,
Her steps attending, whitened plain and field,
As when at times dark-glebe, new-turned, is changed
To white by flock of ocean birds alit,
Or inland borne by storm, or hunger-urged
To filch the late sown grain. Her convent home
Ere long received her. There Ethembria ruled,
Green Erin's earliest nun. Of princely race,
She in past years before the font of Christ
At Patrick's feet had knelt. Once more she sought him:
Over the lovely, lovelier change had passed,
As when on childish girlhood, 'mid a shower
Of lilies earthward wafted, maidenhood
In peacefuller state her spotless throne assumes;—
Forth from the maiden, vestal now had risen:
Lowlier she seemed, more tender, soft, and grave,
Yet loftier; hushed in quiet more divine,
Yet wonder-awed. Again she knelt, and o'er
The bending, queenly head, till then unbent,
That veil he flung which woman parts from man
To make her more than woman. Nigh to death

The Saint forgat not her. With her remained
Keinè; but Patrick dwelt far off at Saul.

The years went by: yet neither chance nor change,
Nor war, nor peace, nor warnings from the priests,
Nor whispers 'mid the omen-mongering crowd,
Might from Eochaidh charm his wayward will,
Nor reasonings of the wise that still preferred
Safe port to victory's pride. He reasoned too,
Reckoning on restless fingers every point
That clenched his mail of proof. 'On Patrick's word
Ye tell me Baptism is the gate of Heaven:
So be it! I have Patrick's word no less
That I shall enter Heaven. What need I more?
If, after death, I find that Patrick lied,
Plain is my right against him! Heaven not won,
Patrick bare hence my daughter through a fraud.
He must restore her fourfold—daughters four,
As fair. If this be hard, the prophet's pledge
For honour's sake his Master must redeem,
And unbaptized receive me. Dupes ye are!
Doomed 'mid the common flock, with branded fleece
Bleating to enter heaven!'

The years went by;
And weakness came. No more his small light form
To dazzled eyes seemed taller than it was:

No more the shepherd watched him from the hill
Heading his hounds, and hoped to catch his smile,
Yet feared his questions keen. The end drew near.
Some wept, some wailed; restless the warriors tramped;
The Druids conned their late discountenanced spells;
The bard his lying harpstrings spurned, so long
Healing, unhelpful now. But far away,
Within that lonely convent tower, from her
Who prayed for ever, mightier rose the prayer.

Within the palace, now by usage old
To all flung open, all were sore amazed
Except the King. The leech beside the bed
Sobbed where he stood, yet sware, 'The fit will pass:
Ten years the King may live.' Eochaidh frowned:
'Shall I, thy fame to patch, live ten years more,
My death-time come? My seventy years are sped:
My sire and grandsire died at sixty-nine.
Like Aodh, shall I lengthen out my days
Toothless, nor fit to vindicate my clan,
Some losel's song? The kingdom is my son's!
Strike from my little milk-white horse the shoes,
And loose him where the freshets make the mead
Greenest in spring-tide. He must die ere long;
And not to him did Patrick open heaven,

Praise be to Patrick's God! May He my sins,
Known and unknown, forgive!' Backward he sank.
Upon his bed, and lay with eyes half closed
Murmuring at times one prayer, five words or six;
Then like an infant slumbered till the sun,
Sinking beneath a great cloud's fiery skirt,
Smote his old eyelids. Waking, in his ears
Whispered the ripening cornfields 'neath the breeze,
For wide were all the casements, that the soul
By death delivered hindrance none might find
(Careful of this the King); and thus he spake:
'Nought ever raised my heart to God like fields
Of harvest, waving wide from hill to hill,
All bread-full for my People.' Hale me forth:
When I have looked once more upon that sight,
My blessing I will give them, and depart.'

Then in the fields they laid him, and he spake:
'May He that to my People sends the bread
Send grace to all who eat it!' With that word
His hands down-falling back once more he sank,
And lay as dead; yet, sudden, rising not,
Nor moving, nor his eyes unclosing, said,
'My body in the tomb of ancient kings
Inter not till beside it Patrick stands,

And looks upon my brow.' A little sigh
Then breathed the King, and died.
Three days, as when
The thunder clingeth to dark mountain brows,
So to the nation clung the grief: three days
The lamentation sounded on the hills,
And rang around the pale blue meres, and rose
Shrill from the bleeding heart of vale and glen,
And rocky isle, and ocean's moaning shore;
While by the bier the yellow tapers stood,
And on the right side knelt Eochaidh's son,
Behind him all the chieftains cloaked in black,
And on his left his daughter knelt, the nun,
Behind her all the sisterhood, white-veiled,
Like tomb-stones after snow-storm. Far away,
At 'Saul of Patrick' dwelt the Saint when first
The King had sickened. Message none he sent,
Though knowing all; and when the end had come,
And heralds now besought him day by day,
No answer made he till o'er eastern seas
Advanced the third fair morning. Then he rose,
And took the Staff of Jesus, and at eve
Stood by the old dead King, and on his brow
Fixed a sad eye. Aloud the people wept;
Kneeling, the warriors eyed their Lord askance;
The nuns their hymn intoned. Above that hymn

A cry rang out: it was the daughter's prayer;
And after that was silence. By the dead
Still stood the Saint, nor e'er removed his gaze.
Then, seen of all, behold, the dead King's hands,
Rose slowly as the weed on wave upheaved
Without its will; and all the strengthless shape
In cerements wrapped, as though by mastering voice
From the white void evoked and realm of death,
Without its will, a gradual bulk, half rose,
The hoar head gazing forth. Upon the face
Had passed a change, the greatest earth may know;
For what the majesty of death began
The majesties of worlds unseen, and life
Resurgent ere its time, had perfected;
All accidents of flesh and sorrowful years
Cancelled and quelled. Yet horror from his eyes
Looked out, as though some vision once endured
Must cling to them for ever. Patrick spake:
'Soul from the dead sent back to earth once more,
What seek'st thou from God's Church?' He answer made,
'Baptism.' Then Patrick o'er him poured the might
Of healing waters in the Name Triune,
The Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit;
And from his eyes the horror passed, and light
Went from them as the light of eyes that rest
On the everlasting glory, while he spake:

'Tempest of darkness drave me past the gates
Celestial, and, a moment's space, within
I heard the hymning of the hosts of God
That feed for ever on the Bread of Life
As feed the nations on the harvest wheat.
Tempest of darkness drave me to the gates
Of Anguish: then a cry came up from earth
That stayed the on-rushing whirlwind: yet mine eyes
Perforce looked in, and many a thousand years
Upon them branded lay that woful sight,
Now washed from them for ever.' Patrick spake:
'This day a twofold choice I give thee, son:
For fifteen years o'er all the Land of Eire
Rule absolute, Ard-Righ o'er lesser Kings;
Or instant else to die, and hear once more
That hymn celestial, and that Vision see
They see who sing that anthem.' Light from God
Over that late dead countenance streamed amain,
Like to his daughter's now—more beauteous thrice—
Yet awful more than beauteous. 'Rule o'er earth,
Rule without end, were nought to that great hymn
Heard but a single moment. I would die.'

Then Patrick, on him gazing, answered, 'Die!'
And died the King once more: and no man wept:
But on her childless breast the nun sustained
Softly her father's head.

That night discourse
Through hall and court circled in whispers low.
First one, 'Was that indeed our King? But where
The sword-scar and the wrinkles?' 'Where,' rejoined
Wide-eyed, the next, 'his little cranks and girds,
The wisdom, and the whim?' Then Patrick spake:
'Sirs, till this day ye never saw your King;
The man ye doted on was but his mask,
His picture, yea his phantom. Ye have seen
At last the man himself.' The night nigh sped,
While slowly o'er the darkling woods went down,
Warned by the cold breath of the up-creeping morn,
Invisible yet nigh, the August moon,
Two vestals, gliding past like moonlight gleams,
Spake thus: the first, 'His daughter's prayer prevailed!'
The second, 'Who may know the ways of God?
For this, may many a heart one day rejoice
In hope! For this, the gift to many a man
Exceed the promise; Faith's invisible germ
Quickened with parting breath; and Baptism given,
It may be, by an angel's hand unseen!'

SAINT PATRICK AND OISÌN. IV.

OISÌN'S QUESTION.

O PATRICK, taught by Him, the Unknown,
These questions answer ere I die:
Why, when the trees at evening moan,
Why must an old man sigh?

No kinsmen of my stock are they
Though reared was I in sylvan cell;
Love-whispers once they breathed: this day
They mutter but 'Farewell!'

What mean the floods? Of old they said
'Thus, thus, ye chiefs, ye clans, sweep on!'
They whiten still their rocky beds:
Those chiefs and clans are gone.

What Power is that which daily heaves
O'er earth's dark verge the rising sun,
As large, the Druid, Alph, believes,
As Tork or Mangerton?

A woman once in youthful flower
  Her infant laid upon my knee:
What was it shook my heart that hour?
  I live—Oh, where is he?

What thing is Youth, which speeds so fast?
  What thing is Life, which lags so long?
Trapped, trapped we are by age at last,
  In a net of fraud and wrong!

I cheated am by eld, or cheat,
  Heart-young as leaves in sun that bask:
Is that fresh heart a counterfeit,
  Or this grey shape a mask?

Some say 'tis folly to be moved:
  'The dog, he dieth—why not thou?'
They lie! We loved! The ill reproved—
  Is Oscar nothing now?

O Patrick of the crosier staff,
  The wondrous Book, and anthems slow,
If thou the riddle know'st but half,
  Help those who nothing know!

Who made the worlds? the soul? Man's race?
The man that knoweth, he is man!
I, once a Prince, will serve in place,
Clansman of that man's clan!

SAINT PATRICK AND THE FOUNDING OF ARMAGH CATHEDRAL.

At Cluain Cain, in Ross, unbent yet old,
Dwelt Patrick long. Its sweet and flowery sward
He to the rock had delved with fixed resolve
To build thereon to God ere yet he died.
Then by him stood God's angel, speaking thus,
'Not here, but northward.' He replied, 'Oh would
This spot might favour find with God! Behold!
Fair is it, and as meet a church to clasp
As is a true heart in a virgin breast
To hold the Faith of Christ. The hinds around
Name it "The beauteous meadow."' 'Fair it is,'
The angel answered, 'nor shall lack its crown.
Another's is its beauty. Here, one day
A pilgrim from the Britons sent shall build,
And, later, what he builds to thine shall pass:
But thou to Macha get thee.'

Patrick then,
Obedient as that Patriarch Sire who faced
At God's command the desert, northward went
In holy silence. Soon to him was lost
That green and purple meadow-sea, embayed
'Twixt two descending woody promontories,
Its outlet girt with isles of rock, its shores
All white with meadow-sweet. Not once he turned,
Climbing the uplands rough, or crossing streams
Swoll'n by the melted snows. The brethren paced
Behind, Benignus first his psalmist, next
Secknall, his bishop, next his brehon Erc,
Mochta, his priest, and Sinell of the Bells,
Rodan, his shepherd, Essa, Bite, and Tassach,
Workers of might in iron and in stone,
God-taught to build the churches of the Faith
With wisdom, and with heart-delighting craft;
Mac Cairthen last, the giant meek that oft
On shoulders broad had borne him through the floods.
His rest was nigh. That hour a stream they crossed,
Deep stream, and, neath his load, the giant sighed:
Saint Patrick said, 'Thou wert not wont to sigh:'
He answered, 'Old I grow. Of them my mates
How many hast thou left in churches housed
Wherein they rule and rest!' The Saint replied,
'Thee also will I leave within a church

For rule and rest; not to mine own too near,
For rarely then should we be seen apart,
Nor yet remote, lest we should meet no more.'
At Clochar soon he placed him. There, long years
Mac Cairthen sat, its Bishop.
As they went,
Oft through the woodlands rang the battle shout;
And twice there rose above the distant hill
The smoke of town new-fired. Yet, none the less,
Spring-touched, the blackbird sang; green, grassy lawns
The cowslips changed to golden; and grey rock,
And river's marge with primroses were starred;
Here shook the windflower; there the blue-bells gleamed
As though a patch of sky had fallen on earth.

Then to Benignus spake the Saint, 'My son,
If grief were lawful in a world redeemed,
The blood-stains on a land so strong in faith
So slack in love, might cloud the holiest brow,
Yea, his that on the bosom lay of Christ.
Clan wars with clan: no injury is forgiven;
Like to the joy in stag-hunts is the war.
Alas! for such what hope?' Benignus answered;
'O Father, cease not for this race to hope,
Lest they should hope no longer. Hope they have:
Still say they, "God will snare us in the end,

Though wild."' And Patrick, 'Spirits twain are theirs:
The stranger, and the poor, at every door
A gracious welcome meets. The youngest child
Officious is in service: maids the bath
Prepare; men fill the wine-cup. Then, forth borne,
Cities they fire, and rich in spoil depart,
Greed mixt with rage—an industry of blood!'
He spake, and thus the younger made reply:
'Father, the stranger is the brother-man
To them; the poor is neighbour. Clans remote
To them are alien worlds. They know not yet
That clans are made of men.'
'This know they shall,'
Patrick made answer, 'when a race far off
Tramples their race to clay! His plague of war
God loosens upon earth that men may know
Brother from foe, and anguish work remorse.'
He spake, and after musings added thus:
'Base of God's kingdom is Humility—
I have not spared to thunder o'er their pride:
Great kings have I rebuked, and signs sent forth;
And banned for their sake fruitful plain, and bay;
Yet still the widow's cry is on the air,
The orphan's wail!' Benignus answered mild,
'O Father, not alone with sign and ban
Hast thou rebuked their madness. Oftener far,

Thy sweetness hath reproved them. Once in woods
Northward of Tara as we tracked our way,
Round us there gathered slaves who felled the pines
For ship-masts. Scarred their hands, and red with blood,
Because their master, Trian, thus had sworn,
'His axe let no man sharpen.' On those hands
Gazing, they wept, soon as thy voice they heard.
Straight to that chieftain's castle went'st thou up,
And bound'st him with thy fast, beside his gate
Sitting in silence till his heart should melt;
And since he willed it not to melt, he died.
Then, in her arms two babes, came forth the Queen,
Black-robed, and freed her slaves, and gave them hire;
And, we returning after many years,
Fill'd was that wood with homesteads; plots of corn
Rustled around them; here were orchards; there
In trench or tank they steeped the bright blue flax;
The saw-mill turned to use the wanton brook;
Murmured the bee-hive; murmured household wheel;
Soft eyes looked o'er it through the dusk; at work
The labourers carolled; matrons glad and maids
Bare us the steadied pail, and children flowers:
Last, from her castle paced the Queen, and led
In either hand her sons, whom thou hadst blessed,
Thenceforth thy priests to stand. The land believed;
And not through ban, or word, sharp-edged, or soft,

But silence and thy fast, the ill custom died.'

He answered, 'Christ, in Christ-like life expressed,
This, this, not words, subdues a land to Christ;
And in this high Apostolate all have part.
Ah me! that flower thou hold'st is strong to preach
Creative Love, because itself is lovely;
But we, the heralds of Redeeming Love,
Because we are unlovely in our lives,
Preach to deaf ears. Yet theirs, theirs too, the sin.'
Benignus made reply: 'The race is old;
Not less their hearts are young. Have patience with them!
For see, in early spring the grave old oaks
Push forth their sprays, wine-red: their strength matured,
Matured is then their verdure.' Patrick paused,
Then, brooding, spake, as one who thinks, not speaks:
'A priest there was who with me ten years walked,
Warrior in youth and Bard. One day we heard
The shock of warring clans—I hear it still:
Within him, as in darkening vase you note
The ascending wine, I watched the passion mount:—
Sudden he dashed him down into the fight,
Nor e'er to Christ returned.' Benignus answered:
'I saw above a dusky forest roof
The glad Spring run, leaving a track sea-green:

Not straight she ran; and yet she reached her goal.
Later I saw above green copse of thorn
The glad Spring run, leaving a track foam-white:
Not straight she ran; yet soon she conquered all!
O Father, is it sinful to be glad
Here amid sin and sorrow? Joy is strong,
Strongest in spring-tide. Mourners I have known
That, homeward wending from the new-dug grave,
Against their will, where sang the happy birds,
Have felt the aggressive gladness stir their hearts,
And smiled amid their tears.' So babbled he,
Shamed at his spring-tide raptures.

As they went,
Upon their left hand stretched a mighty land
Of forest-girdled hills, mother of streams:
Beyond it sank the day; while round the west
Like giants thronged the great cloud phantoms towered.
Advancing, din they heard, and found in woods
A hamlet and a field by war unscathed,
And boys on all sides running. Placid sat
The village Elders; neither lacked that hour
The harp that gently tranquillises age,
But wakes young hearts with musical unrest,
Forerunner oft of love's unrest. Ere long
The measure changed to livelier: maid with maid
Danced 'mid the dancing shadows of the trees,

And youth with youth; till now, the strangers near,
Those Elders welcomed them with act benign;
And soon was slain the fatted kid, and soon
The lamb; and no man asked till hunger's rage
Was quelled, 'Who art thou?' Patrick made reply,
'A Priest of God.' Then prayed they, 'Offer thou
To Him our sacrifice! Doubtless 'tis He,
Who saves from war this hamlet hid in woods.
Unblest be he who finds it!' Thus they spake,
The matrons, not the youths. In friendly talk
Went by the hours, with laughter winged and tale;
But when the moon, on rolling through the heavens,
Showered through the leaves a dew of sprinkled light
O'er the dark ground, the maidens garments brought,
Woven in their quiet homes when nights were long,
Red cloak, and kirtle green, and laid them soft
For coverlet upon the warm dry grass,
Honouring the stranger guests. For them too mean
They deemed their low-roofed cots. Glad-hearted rose
The Christian hymn not timid: loud it rang
Above the woods. Ere long, their happy rites
Fulfilled, the wanderers laid them down and slept.

At midnight by the side of Patrick stood
Victor, God's Angel, saying, 'Lo! thy work
Hath favour found, and thou ere long shalt die:

Thus therefore saith the Lord, "So long as sea
Girdeth this isle, so long thy name shall hang
In splendour o'er it like the stars of God."'
Then Patrick said, 'A boon! I crave a boon!'
The angel answered, 'Speak;' and Patrick said,
'Let them that with me toiled, or in the years
To come shall toil, building o'er all this land
The Fortress-Temple and great House of Christ,
Equalled with me my name in Erin share.'
And Victor answered; 'Half thy prayer is thine:
With thee shall they partake. Not less, thy name
Higher than theirs shall rise, and wider spread,
Since thus more plainly shall His glory shine,
Whose glory is His justice.'
With the morn
Those pilgrims rose, and, prime entoned, and lauds,
Poured out their blessing on that woodland clan,
Which, round them pressing, kissed them, robe and knee;
Then onward journeyed till, at set of sun,
Shone out the roofs of Macha, and that tower
Where Dairè dwelt, its lord.
Then Patrick sent
To Dairè embassage, vouchsafing prayer
As sire might pray of son: 'Yon hill give thou
To Christ, that we may build His church thereon.'
And Dairè answered, with a brow of storms,

'Your master is a mighty man, we know.
Garban, that lied to God, he slew through prayer,
And many a lake hath banned, and many a plain,
For trespass there committed! Let it be!
A Chief of souls he is! No signs we work,
Rulers earth-born: yet somewhat are we here—
Depart! By others answer we will send.'

So Dairè sent to Patrick men of might,
Fierce men, the battle's nurslings. Thus they spake:
'High region for high heads! If build ye must,
Build on the plain: the hill is Dairè's right:
Church site he grants you, and the field around.'
And Patrick, glancing from his Office Book,
Made answer, 'Deo Gratias,' and no more.

Upon that plain a little church he built
Ere long, a convent likewise, girt with mound
Banked from the meadow loam, and deftly set
With stone, and fence, and woody palisade,
That neither warring clans, far heard by day,
Might hurt his cloistered charge, nor wolves by night
Howling in woods; and there he served the Lord.

But Dairè scorned the Saint, and grudged his gift,
Though small; and half in spleen, and half in greed,

Sent down two stately coursers, all night long
To graze the deep, sweet pasture round the church:
Ill deed:—and so, for guerdon of that sin,
Dead lay the coursers twain at the break of dawn.

Then fled the servants back, and told their Lord
(Fearing for negligence rebuke and scath),
'Thy Christian slew the coursers!' and the King
Gave word to slay or bind him. But from God
A sickness fell on Dairè nigh to death,
That day and night. When morning brake, the Queen,
A woman leal with kind barbaric heart,
Her bosom from the sick man's head withdrew
A moment while he slept; and, round her gazing,
Closed with both hands upon a liegeman's arm,
And sped him to the Saint for pardon and peace.
Then Patrick, dipping in the inviolate fount
A chalice, blessed the water, giving thus
Command; 'The coursers sprinkle, and the King;'
And straightway as from death the King arose,
And rose from death the coursers.

Dairè then
His tall frame boastful with that life renewed,
Took with him men, and down the stone-paved hill
Rode from his tower, and through the woodlands green,
And bare with him an offering of those days,

A brazen cauldron vast. Embossed it shone
With sculptured shapes. On one side hunters rode:
Low stretched their steeds: the dogs pulled down the stag,
Unseen, except the branching horns that rose
Like hands in protest. Feasters, on the other,
Lifted the cup, pledging the safe return.
This offering Dairè brought, and, entering, spake:
'A gift for guerdon, and for grace, O Priest!'
And Patrick, upward glancing from his book,
Made answer, 'Deo Gratias!' and no more.

King Dairè, homeward riding with knit brow,
Muttered, 'Churl's welcome for a kingly boon!'
And, drinking all that night the stormy breath
Of others' anger blent with his, cried loud,
'Ride forth at morn and bring me back my gift!
Spurn it he shall not, though he prize it not.'
They heard him, and obeyed. At noon the King
Demanded thus, 'What answer made the Saint?'
They said, 'His eyes he raised not from his book,
But answered, "Deo Gratias!" and no more.'

Then Dairè stamped his foot, like war-horse stung
By gadfly;—musing next, and mute he sat
A space; and lastly roared great laughter peals,

Till roared in mockery back the palace roof,
And clashed his hands together, shouting loud :
'A gift, and "Deo Gratias!"—gift withdrawn,
And "Deo Gratias!" Sooth, the word is good!
Madman is this, or man of God? We'll know!'
So from his frowning fortress once again
Adown the resonant road o'er street and bridge
Rode Dairè, at his right the Queen in fear,
With dumbly pleading countenance ; close behind,
With tangled locks and loose-hung battle-axe,
Ran the wild kerne ; and loud the bull-horn blew.
The convent reached, King Dairè from his horse
Flung his great limbs, and at the doorway towered,
In-gazing stern ; the Queen beside him stood,
Her lustrous violet eyes all lost in tears :
One hand on Dairè's garment lay like light
Wandering on dusky ripple ; one, upraised,
Held in the fiery, high-necked horse that champed
The bit, and tossed his great head nigh to hers.
Close thronged the kernes. Within, the Man of God,
Sole-sitting, read his Office Book unmoved,
And ending, fixed his keen eye on the King,
Not rising from his seat.
Then fell from God
Insight on Dairè, and aloud he cried,
'A kingly man, of mind immoveable

Art thou; and as the rock beneath my tower
Shakes not in storm, so shakes not heart of thine:
Such men are of the height and not the plain:
Therefore, that hill to thee I grant unsought
Which whilome I refused. Possession take
This day, lest hostile demon warp my mood,
And build thereon thy Church. The same shall stand
Strong mother-church of all thy great clan Christ!'

Thus Dairè spake; and Patrick, at his word
Rising, gave thanks to God, and to the King
A blessing heard in heaven; and making sign
Went forth, attended by his priestly train,
Benignus first, his dearest, then the rest.
In circuit thrice they girt that hill, and sang
Anthem first heard when unto God was vowed
That House which David offer'd in his heart,
His son in act, and hymn of Holy Church
Hailing that City like a Bride attired,
From heaven to earth descending. With them sang
An angel choir above them borne. The birds
Forbore their songs, listening that wondrous strain,
Ethereal music and by men unheard
Except the Elect. The King in reverence paced
Behind, his liegemen next, a mass confused,
With saffron standard gay and spears upheld

That through the thickets flashed. These kept not line,
For Alp was still recounting battles old,
Aodh of wizards sang, and Ir of Love,
While bald-pate Conan, sharpening from his eye
The sneering light, shot from his plastic mouth
Shrill taunt and biting gibe. The younger sort
Watched the green copse, and through it many a shaft
Launched at the flying beast. From ledge to ledge
Clomb Angus, keen of sight, with hand o'er brow,
Forth gazing on some far blue ridge of war,
With nostril wide outblown, and snorting cried,
'Would I were there!'

Meantime, the Man of God
Had reached the fair crown of that sacred hill,
A circle girt with broad trees branching low,
And roofed with heaven. Beyond its tonsure fringe
(Birch trees and oaks) there pushed a thorn milk-white,
And close beside it slept in shade a fawn
Whiter. The startled dam had left its side,
And through the dark stems fled like flying gleam.
Minded they were, the kernes, to kill that fawn,
And all the priests stood silent; but the Saint
Put forth his hand, and o'er her signed the Cross,
And, stooping, on his shoulder placed her firm,
And bade the brethren mark with stones her lair
Dewless and dusk; then, singing as he went,

'Like as the hart desires the water brooks,'
He walked, that hill descending. Light from God
O'ershone his face. Meantime the awakened fawn
Now rolled her dark eye on the silver head
Close by, now turning, licked the wrinkled hand,
Unfearing. Soon, with little whimpering sob,
The doe drew near, and paced at Patrick's side:
At last they reached a little field low down
Beneath that hill, and there the fawn he laid.

But Dairè questioned Patrick of that deed,
Incensed; and scornful asked, 'Shall mitred man
Play thus the Shepherd and the Forester?'
And Patrick answered, 'Aged men, O King,
Their reasons oft forget. Benignus seek,
If haply God has shown him for what cause
I wrought this thing.' Then Dairè turned him back,
And faced Benignus; and with lifted hand,
Pure as a maid's, and dimpled like a child's,
Picturing his thoughts on air, the little monk
That deed set forth. 'Great mystery, King, is Love:
Poets its worthiness have sung in lays
Unread by ruder ones like me; and yet
Thus much the simplest and the rudest know,
Dear is the fawn to her that gave it birth,
And to the crownèd monarch dear the child

That mounts his knee. Nor here the marvel ends;
For, like yon star, the great Paternal Heart
Through all the unmeted, unimagined years
(While yet Creation uncreated hung,
A thought, a dawn-streak, on the verge extreme
Of lonely Godhead's Inner Universe)
Panted and pants with splendour of its love,
The Eternal Sire rejoicing in the Son,
And Both in Him Who still from Both proceeds,
Bond of their love. Moreover, King, that Son
Who, Virgin-born, raised from the ruinous gulf
Our world, and made it footstool to God's Throne,
The same is Love, and died for Love, and reigns.
Loveless, His Church were but a corse stone-cold;
Loveless, her creed were but a winter leaf,
Network of barren thoughts, the cerement wan
Of Faith extinct. For this cause he, our Sire,
Revered the anguish of that mother doe,
And inly vowed that where her offspring couched
His chiefest Church should stand, from age to age
Confession plain, 'mid raging of the clans,
That God is Love;—His worship void and vain
Disjoined from Love that, rising to the heights
Even to the depths descends.'

Conversing thus,
Macha they reached. Ere long where lay the fawn

Stood God's new altar; and ere many years
Far o'er the woodlands rose the Church high-towered,
Peace preaching to a torn and troubled world.
The Saint who built it found not there his grave,
Though wished for; him God buried otherwhere,
Fulfilling thus the counsels of His Will:
But old, and grey, when many a winter's frost
To spring had yielded, bent by wounds and woes
Upon that Church's altar looked once more
King Dairè; at its font was joined to Christ;
And, midway 'twixt that altar and that font,
Rejoined his beauteous mate a later day.

ST. PATRICK AND OISÌN. V.

OISÌN'S VISION.

As, dim through snowy flakes, the dawn
  Peered o'er the moorlands frore,
The old, snow-headed Bard, Oisìn,
  Sat by the convent door.

His chin he propped on that clenched hand
  Of old in battles feared:
And like a silver flood, far-kenned,
  Down streamed to earth his beard.

That sun his eyes could see no more
  Their thin lids loved to feel:
It rose; and on his cheek a tear
  Began to uncongeal.

Then slowly thus he spake: 'Three times
  This thought has come to me,
Patrick, that I am older thrice
  Than I am famed to be:

'For on the ruins of that house,
Once stately to behold,
Where feasted Fionn the King, there sighs
A wood of alders old.

'And on my Oscar's grave three elms
Have risen, and mouldered three;
And on my Father's grave, the oak
Is now a hollow tree.

'Patrick, of me they noised a tale,
That down beneath a lake
A hundred years I lived, unchanged,
For a Faery Lady's sake:

'They said that, home when I returned,
The men I loved were dead;
And that the whiteness fell that hour
Like snow upon my head.

'A song of mine, a dream in youth,
That tale misdeemed for true:
Far other dream was mine in age:
A dream that no man knew.

'For though I sang of things loved well,
I hid the things loved best:
Patrick, to thee that later dream
At last shall be confessed.

'On Gahbra's field my Oscar fell:
Last died my Father, Fiónn:
The wind went o'er their grassy mounds;
I heard it, and lived on.

'I loved no more the lark by Lee,
Nor yet the battle-cry;
And therefore in a dell, one day,
I laid me down to die.

'The cold went on into my heart:
Methought that I was dead:
Yet well I knew that angels waved
Their wings above my head.

'They said, "This man, for Erin's sake
Shall tarry here an age,
Till Christ to Erin comes—shall sleep
In this still hermitage:

'"That so, ere yet that great old time
Is wholly gone and past,
Her manlier with her saintly day
May blend in bridal fast.

'"And since of deadly deeds he sang
Above him we will sing
The Death that saved: and we from him
Will keep the gadfly's wing.

'"For him an age, for us an hour,
Here, like a cradled child,
Shall sleep the man whose hand was red,
Whose heart was undefiled."

'Patrick! That vision, was it truth?
Or fancy's mocking gleam?
That I should tarry till He came—
'Twas not, 'twas not a dream!

'And wondrous is mine age, I know;
For whiter than the thorn
Was this once-honoured head, ere yet
The men now white were born:

'And on my Oscar's grave three elms
Have risen, and mouldered three;
And on my father's grave, the oak
Is now a hollow tree.'

Then said the monks, 'His brain is hurt:'
But Patrick said, 'They lie!
Thou God that lov'st thy grey-haired child,
Would I for him might die!'

And Patrick cried, 'Oisìn! the thirst
Of God is in thy breast!
He who has dealt thy heart the wound
Ere long will give it rest!'

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF SAINT PATRICK.

WHEN Patrick now was old, and nigh to death,
Undimmed was still his eye; his tread was strong;
And there was ever laughter in his heart,
And music in his laughter. In a wood
Nigh to Ardmacha dwelt he with his monks;
And there, like birds that cannot stay their songs,
Love-touched in Spring, or grateful for their nests,
They to the woodsmen preached of Christ, their King,
To swineherds, and to hinds that tended sheep,
Yea, and to pilgrim guests from distant clans;
His shepherd-worshipped birth when breath of kine
Went o'er the Infant; all His wondrous works
Or words from mount, or field, or anchored boat;
And Christendom upreared for weal of men
And Angel-wonder. Daily preached the monks,
And daily built their convent. Wildly sweet
The season, prime of unripe spring, when March
From cup half gelid yet, some drops distills

Of finer relish than the hand of May
Pours from her full-brimmed beaker. Frost, though gone,
Had left its glad vibration on the air;
Laughed the blue heavens, as though they ne'er had frowned,
Through leafless oak-boughs; trees of kindlier grace
And swifter to believe Spring's 'tidings good'
Took the sweet lights upon a breast bud-swoll'n,
And crimson as the redbreast's; while, as when
Clear rings a flute-note through sea-murmurs harsh,
At intervals ran out a streak of green
Across the dim-hued forest.

From their wood
The strong arms of the monks had hewn them space
For all their convent needed; farm-yard stored
With stacks that all the winter fast had held
Their hoarded harvest sunshine; pasture green
Whitened with sheep; fair garden fenceless still,
With household herbs new-sprouting: but, as oft
Some conquered race, forth sallying in its spleen
When serves the occasion, wins a province back,
Or flouts at least the foe, so here once more
Wild flowers, a clan unvanquished, raised their heads
'Mid the young wheat; and where from craggy height
Pushed the grey ledge, the woodland host recoiled
As though from Parthian flight; while many a bird,
Barbaric from the inviolate forest launched

Wild-warbled scorn on all that life reclaimed,
Mute garth—new orchard. Child of distant hills,
A proud stream, swollen by midnight rains, down leaped
From rock to rock. The precinct new it spurned
With airy dews silvering the bramble green
And more the beech-stock redd'ning.
'Twas the hour
Of rest, and every monk was glad at heart,
For each had wrought with might. Both hands upheld,
Mochta, the Priest, had thundered against sin,
Wrath-roused, as when some Prince too late returned
Stares at the sea-side village all in flames,
The slave-thronged ship escaped. The Bishop, Erc,
Old feuds had reconciled by Brehon Law
Where Brehon Law was lawful. Boys wild-eyed
Had from Benignus learned the Church's song,
Boys brightened now, yet tempered, by that age
Gracious to stripling as to maid, that brings
Valour to one and modesty to both,
Where youth is loyal to the Virgin-born.
The giant meek, Mac Cairthen, beam on beam
On bending neck had borne, while Cruimther felled
The oaks, and from the anvil Laeban showered
The bickering sparks. A little way removed,
Beneath a pine three vestals sat close-veiled :
A song these childless sang of Bethlehem's Child,

Low-toned, and worked their Altar-cloth, a Lamb
All white on golden blazon; near it bled
The Bird that with her own blood feeds her young.
Red drops her holy breast affused. These three
Were daughters of three Kings. The best and fairest,
King Dairè's daughter, Erenait by name,
Had loved Benignus in her Pagan years.
He knew it not: full sweet to her his voice
Chaunting in choir. One day through grief of love
The maiden lay as dead: Benignus shook
Dews from the font above her, and she woke
With heart emancipate that outsoared the lark
Lost in blue heavens. She loved the Spouse of Souls.
It was as though some child that, dreaming, wept
Its childish playthings lost, by bells awaked,
Bride-bells, had found herself a Queen new wed
Unto her Country's Lord.
While monk with monk
Conversed, the son of Patrick's sister sat,
Secknall by name, beside the window, sole,
And marked where Patrick from his hill of prayer
Approached, descending slowly. At the sight
He, maker blithe of songs, and wild as hawk
Albeit a Saint, whose wont it was at times,
Or shy, or strange, or flattery thus to shun,
Whom most he loved with mockery to attempt,

Whispered a brother, 'Speak to Patrick thus,
"When all men praised thee, Secknall made reply,
'A blessed man were Patrick save for this,
Alms deeds he preaches not.'"' The Brother went:
Ere long among them entered Patrick, wroth,
Or, likelier, feigning wrath:—'What man is he
Who saith I preach not alms deeds?' Secknall rose,
'I said it, Father, and the charge is true.'
Then Patrick answered, 'Out of Charity
I preach not Charity. This People, won
To Christ, ere long will prove a race of Saints;
To give will be its passion, not to win:
Its heart is generous; but its hand is slack
In all save war: herein there lurks a snare:
The priest will fatten, and the beggar feast:
But the lean land will yield nor Chief nor Prince
Hire of two horses yoked to chariot beam.'
Then Secknall spake, 'O Father, dead it lies,
Mine earlier charge—stone-dead. My second hear,
Since in our Order's equal Brotherhood
Censure uncensured is the right of all.
You press to the earth your converts! gold you spurn;
Yet bind upon them heavier load than when
Conqueror his captive tasks. Have shepherds three
Bowed them to Christ? "Build up a Church," you cry;
So one the sand must draw, and one the stone,

And one the lime. Honouring the seven great Gifts,
Oft in one valley churches seven you raise.
Who serveth you fares hard!' The Saint replied,
'Second as first! I came not to this land
To crave scant offering, nor with shallow plough
Cleave I this glebe. The priest that soweth much
(For here the land is fruitful) much shall reap:
Who soweth little nought but weeds shall bind
And poppies of oblivion.' Secknall next,
'Yet man to man will whisper, and the face
Of all this people darken like a sea
Black with the coming storm.' He answered, 'Son,
I know this people better. They are fierce
In anger; neither flies direct their thought;
For some, though true to Nature, lie to men,
And others, true to men, are false to God:
Yet as the prince's is the poor man's heart;
Burthen for God sustained no burthen is
To him; and those who most have given to Christ
The most His fulness share.'
Secknall replied,
'Low lies my second charge; a third remains,
Which, as a shaft from seasoned bow, not green,
May pierce the mark. With convents still you sow
The land: in other countries sparse and small,
To cities here they swell. A hundred monks

On one late barren mountain dig and pray;
A hundred nuns gladden one woodland lawn,
Or sing in one small island. 'Well—'tis well!
Yet, balance lost and measure, nought is well.
The Angelic Life more common will become
Than life of mortal men.' The Saint replied,
'No shaft from homicidal yew-tree bow
Is thine, but winged of thistle-down. Now hear!
Measure is good; but measure's law with scale
Changeth; nor doth the part reflect the whole.
Each nation hath its gift, and each to all
Not equal ministers. If all were eye,
Where then were ear? If all were ear or hand,
Where then were eye? The nation is the part;
The Church the whole'—But Cruimther where he stood,
Old warrior, shouted like a chief war-waked,
'This land is Eire! No nation lives like her!
A part! Who portions Eire?' The Saint, with smile
Resumed: 'The whole that from the part receives,
That part in turn repaying, till man's race
Grow to the fulness of Mankind redeemed.
What gift hath God in eminence given to Eire?
Singly, her race is feeble; strong when knit:
Nought knits them truly save a heavenly aim.
I knit them as an army unto God,
Give them God's War!' Yon star is militant!

Its splendour 'gainst the dark must fight or die :
So wars the Faith I preach against the world ;
And nations fitted least for this world's gain
Her triumph most can speed. Three hundred years,
Well used, of Eire should make a northern Rome.
Cruimther ! her destiny is this, or nought ;
Secknall ! the highest only can she reach ;
Alone the Apostle's crown is hers : for this,
A Rule I give her, strong, yet strong in Love ;
Monastic households build I far and wide ;
Monastic clans I plant among her clans,
With abbots for their chiefs. The same shall live
Long as God's love o'errules them.'

Secknall then
Knelt, reverent ; yet his eye had in it mirth,
And round the full bloom of the red rich mouth,
No whit ascetic, ran a dim half smile.
'Father, my charges three have futile fallen,
And thrice, like some great warrior of the bards,
Your conquering wheels above me you have driven.
Brought low, confession make I. Once, in woods
Wandering, we heard a sound, now loud, now low,
As he that treads the sand-hills hears the sea
High murmuring while he climbs the crumbling slope;
Low, as he drops to landward. 'Twas a throng
Awed, yet tumultuous, wild-eyed, wondering, fierce,

That, round a harper standing, stave on stave
As ended each, applauded. "War, still war!"
Thou saidst; "the Bards but sing of War and Death!"
Ah! if they sang that Death which conquered Death,
Then, like a tide, this people, music-drawn,
Would mount the shores of Christ! Bards love not us,
Prescient that that high power, elsewhere by priests
Wielded but here by them, to us shall pass:
Yet we love them for good they might confer."
Then didst thou turn on me an eye of might
(Such as on Malach, when the babe boar-slain
Thou badst him raise by miracle of prayer),
And saidst, "Go, fell thy pine, and frame thy harp,
And in the hearing of this people sing
Some Saint, the friend of Christ." Too long the attempt
Shame-faced, I shunned; at last, like him of old,
That better brother who refused, yet went,
My hymn I made. 'Tis called "A Child of Life."'
Then Patrick, 'Welcome is the praise of Saints:
Sing thou thy hymn.'
From kneeling Secknall rose
And stood, and singing, raised his hand as when
Her cymbal by the Red Sea Miriam raised,
While silent stood God's hosts, and, silent now,
They lay, the entombing waters. Shook, like hers,
His slight form wavering 'mid the gusts of song.

He sang the Saint of God, create from nought
To work God's Will. As others gaze on earth,
Her vales, her plains, her blue seas mountain-girt,
So gazed the Saint for ever upon God
That girds all worlds—saw intermediate nought—
And on Him watched the sunshine and the storm,
And learned His Countenance, and from It alone,
Drew in upon his heart its day and night.
That contemplation was for him no dream:
It hurled him on his mission. As a sword
He lodged his soul within the Hand Divine,
And wrought, keen-edged, His counsel. Next to God,
Next, and how near, he loved the souls of men:
Yea, men to him were souls; the unspiritual herd
He saw as magic-bound, or chained to beast,
And groaned to free them. For their sakes, unawed
He faced the ravening waves, and iron rocks,
Hunger, and poniard's edge, and poisoned cup,
And faced the face of kings, and faced the host
Of demons raging for their realm o'erthrown.
This was the Man of Love. Self-love cast out,
The love made spiritual of a thousand hearts
Met in his single heart, and kindled there
A sun-like image of Love Divine. Within
That Spirit-shadowed heart was Christ conceived
Hourly through faith, hourly through Love was born;

Sole secret this of fruitfulness to Christ.
Who heard him heard with his a lordlier voice,
Strong as that voice which said, 'Let there be light,'
And light o'erflowed their beings. He from each
His secret won; to each God's secret told.
He touched them, and they lived. In each, the flesh
To soul subdued, the affections, vassals proud,
By conscience ruled, and conscience lit by Christ,
The whole man stood a hierarchy of powers
In equipoise, Image restored of God.
A nation of such men his portion was;
That nation's Patriarch he. No wrangler loud,
No sophist, lesser victories knew he none:
No triumph his of sect, or camp, or court;
The Saint his great soul flung upon the world,
And took the people with him like a wind
Missioned from God that with it wafts in spring
Some winged race, a multitudinous night,
Into new sun-bright climes.

As Secknall sang,
Nearer the Brethren drew. On Patrick's right
Benignus stood; old Mochta on his left,
Slow-eyed, with solemn smile and sweet; next Erc,
Whose ever-listening countenance that hour
Beyond its wont was listening; Cruimther near,
The workman Saint, his many-wounded hands

Together clasped: forward, each mighty arm
On shoulders propped of Essa and of Bite,
Leaned the meek giant Cairthen: twelve in all
Clustering they stood, and in them was one soul.
When Secknall ceased, in silence still they hung
Each upon each, glad-hearted since the meed
Of all their toils shone out before them plain,
Gold gates of heaven—a nation entering in.
A light was on their faces, and without
Spread a great light, for sunset now had fallen,
A Pentecostal fire, upon the woods,
Or like a rain of angels streamed o'er earth.
In marvel gazed the twelve: yea, clans far off
Stared from their hills, deeming the woods aflame.
When passed that glory, upon Secknall's hymn
Discourse arose. Its radiance from his face
Had, like the sunset's, vanished as he spoke;
'Father, what sayst thou?' Patrick made reply,
'My son, the hymn is good; for Truth is good,
And Fame, obsequious often to base heads,
For once is loyal, and its crown hath laid
Where honour's debt was due.' Then both his hands
Secknall in triumph raised, and chaunted loud
That hymn's first stave, earlier through craft withheld,
Stave that to Patrick's name, and his alone,
Offered that hymn's whole incense. Ceasing, he stood

Low-bowed, with hands upon his bosom held.
Great laughter from the brethren came, their Chief
Thus trapped, though late—he meekest man of men,
To claim the saintly crown. First young, then old
(Later the old, and sore against their will),
That laughter raised. Last from the giant chest
Of Cairthen forth it rolled its solemn bass,
Like sea-sound swallowing lighter sounds hard by.
But Patrick laughed not: o'er his face there passed,
Shade lost in light; and thus he spake, 'O friends,
That which I have to do I know in part:
God grant I work my work. That which I am
He knows Who made me. Saints He hath, good store:
Their names are written in His Book of Life;
Kneel down, my sons, and pray that if thus long
To stand I seem, I fall not at the end.'

Then in a circle kneeling prayed the twelve.
But when they rose, Secknall with serious brow
Advanced, and knelt, and kissed Saint Patrick's foot,
And said, 'O Father, at thy hest that hymn
I made, long labouring, and thy crown it stands:
Thou, therefore, grant me gifts, for strong thy prayer.'

And Patrick said, 'The house wherein thy hymn
Is sung ere noontide meal shall lack not bread:

And if men sing it in a house new-built,
Where none hath dwelt, nor bridegroom yet, nor bride,
Nor hath the cry of babes been heard therein,
Upon that house the watching of the Saints
Of Eire, and Patrick's watching, shall be fixed
Even as the stars.' And Secknall said, 'What more?'

Then Patrick added, 'They that night and morn
Down-lying and uprising, sing that hymn,
They too that softly whisper it, nigh death,
If pure of heart, and liegeful unto Christ,
Shall see God's face; and, since the hymn is long,
For children and the poor, its grace shall rest
Full measure on the last three lines; and thou
Of this dear company shalt die the first,
And first of Eire's Apostles.' Then his cheek
Secknall laid down once more on Patrick's foot,
And answered, 'Deo Gratias.'
Thus in mirth,
And solemn talk, and prayer, that brother band,
In the golden age of Faith, with great free heart
Gave thanks to God that blissful eventide,
A thousand and four hundred years and more
Gone by. But now clear rang the compline bell,
And two by two they wended towards their church
Across a space for cloister set apart,

Yet still with wood-flowers sweet, and scent beside
Of sod that evening turned. The night came on;
A dim ethereal twilight o'er the hills
Deepened to dewy gloom. Against the sky
Stood ridge and rock unmarked amid the day:
A few stars o'er them shone. As bower on bower,
Let go the waning light, so bird on bird
Let go its song. Two songsters still remained,
Each feebler than a fountain soon to cease,
And claimed somewhile across the dusking dell
Rivals unseen in sleepy argument,
Each, the last word :—a pause; and then, once more,
An unexpected note :—a longer pause;
And then, past hope, one other note, the last.'
A moment more the brethren stood in prayer:
The rising moon upon the church-roof new
Glimmered; and o'er it sang an angel choir,
'Venite Sancti.' Entering, soon were said
The psalm, 'He giveth sleep,' and hymn 'Lætare;'
And in his solitary cell each monk
Lay down, rejoicing in the love of God.

The happy years went by. When Patrick now
And all his company were housed with God,
That hymn, at morning sung, and noon, and eve,
Even as it lulled the waves of warring clans,

So lulled with music lives of toil-worn men,
And charmed their ebbing breath. One time it chanced
When in his convent Kevin with his monks
Thrice sang that hymn, the board prepared, a guest
Foot-sore and hungered, murmured, 'Wherefore thrice?'
And Kevin answered, 'Speak not thus, my son,
For while we sang it, visible to all,
Saint Patrick was among us. At his right
Benignus stood, and, all around, the Twelve,
God's light upon their brows; while Secknall knelt,
Demanding meed of song. Moreover, son,
That self-same day and hour, twelve months gone by,
Patrick, our Patriarch, died; and happy Feast
Is that he holds, by two short days alone
Severed from his, of Hebrew Patriarchs last,
And chief. The Holy House at Nazareth
He ruled benign, God's Warder with white hairs,
And still his feast, that silver star of March,
When snows afflict the hill and frost the moor,
With temperate beam gladdens the vernal church—
All praise to God who draws the Twain so near.'

SAINT PATRICK AND OISÍN. VI.

OISÌN'S GOOD CONFESSION.

Not seldom crossed by bodings sad,
In words though kind yet hard
Spake Patrick to his guest, Oisìn;
For Patrick loved the bard

In whose broad bosom, swathed with beard
Like cliffs with ivy trailed,
A Christian strove with a Pagan soul,
And neither quite prevailed.

Silent as shades the shadowing monks
O'er cloistral courts might glide;
But the War-Bard strode through the church itself
Like hunter on mountain-side.

Yea, sometimes while his beads he told,
Fierce thoughts, a rebel breed,
Burst up from the graves of his warriors dead,
And he stormed at priest and creed.

His end drew nigh. 'Twas after years
  Had proved stern warnings vain;
When dying he lay on his wolf-skin bed,
  And murmured a warlike strain.

The Saint drew near; he gazed; then spake,
  'A fair child died one day:
Four weeks had passed, yet, changeless still,
  Like a child asleep he lay.

'They could not hide him in the ground
  Though hand and heart were chill,
For round his lips the smile avouched
  The soul was in him still.

'Then lo! a man of God came by
  And stood beside the bier,
And spake, "A Pagan house is this,
  And yet a Saint lies here!

'"God shaped this child His praise to sing
  To a blind and Pagan race;
And till that song is sung, in heaven
  He may not see God's Face."

'Then thrice around that child he moved
With circling censer-cloud,
And touched with censer fire his tongue,
And the dead child sang aloud.

'Oisìn! like larks beside thy Lee,
So loud he sang his hymn:
And straight baptized he was, and died
And, dead, his face grew dim.

'So then, since Christ had caught to heaven
The fair soul washed from sin,
A little grave they dug, and laid
The little Saint therein.

'And ever as fell the night, that grave
Shone like the Shepherds' star,
With happy beam, and homeward drew
The wanderer from afar.

'Oisìn! thy Land is as that child!
Thou call'st her dead—thy Land—
For cold is Fionn, thy sire; and he,
He was her strong right hand!

'And cold is Oscar now, thy son;
Her mighty heart was he:
Oisìn! let dead at last be dead;
Let living, living be!

'Her great old Past is gone at last:
Her happier Future waits:
Yet entrance never can she find
Till Faith unbars the gates.

'Prince of thy country's songful choir!
Thou wert her golden tongue!
Sing thou her new song, "I believe,"
Give thou to God her song!'

Then suddenly that old man stood,
And made his arms a cross:
And light was his from heaven that changed
The earth to dust and dross:

And, pierced by beams from those two hands
Of Jesus crucified,
His Erin of two thousand years
Held forth her hands and died:

For all her sceptres by a Reed
That hour were overborne;
And all her crowns went down that hour
Before the Crown of Thorn.

As shines the sun through snowy haze
Oisìn's white head forth shone:
'In God the Father I believe,'
He sang, 'and Mary's Son:'

And, onward as the swan-chaunt swept
Adown the creed's broad flood,
In radiance waxed his face, as though
He saw the Face of God.

Then Patrick, with his wondering monks,
Knelt down, and said, 'Amen,'
While slowly dropped a sun that ne'er
Saw that white head again.

The rite complete, the old man sank,
And turned him on his side:
Next morning, as the Lauds began,
'My Son,' he said, and died.

THE CONFESSION OF SAINT PATRICK.

At Saul then, by the inland-spreading sea,
There where began my labour, comes the end.
I, blind and witless, will'd it otherwise :
God will'd it thus. When prescience fell of death
I said, 'My Resurrection place I choose'
(O fool, for ne'er since boyhood choice was mine
Save choice my will to subject unto God)
'At great Ardmacha.' Thitherward I turned ;
But in my pathway, with forbidding hand
Victor, God's angel stood. 'Not so,' he said,
'For in Ardmacha stands thy princedom fixed,
Age after age, thy teaching, and thy law,
But not thy grave. Return thou to that shore
Thy place of small beginnings, and thereon
Sing thou to God thy little hymn, and die.'

Yea, Lord, my mouth would praise Thee ere I die,
The Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit,
Who knitteth in His Church the just to Christ :

Help me, my sons—mine orphans soon to be—
Help me to praise Him; ye that round me sit
On those grey rocks; ye that have faithful been,
Honouring, despite dishonour of my sins,
His servant: I would praise Him yet once more,
Though mine the stammerer's voice, or as a child's;
For it is written, 'Stammerers shall speak plain
Sounding Thy Gospel.' 'They whom Christ hath sent
Are Christ's Epistle, borne to ends of earth,
Writ by His Spirit, and plain to souls elect:'
Lord, am not I of Thine Apostolate?

Yea, by abjection Thine, by suffering Thine!
Till I was humbled, I was as a stone
In deep mire sunk. Then, stretched from heaven, Thy Hand
Slid under me in might, and lifted me,
And fixed me in Thy Temple, where Thou would'st.
Wonder, ye great ones, wonder, ye the wise!
On me, the last and least, this charge was laid,
This crown, that I in humbleness and truth,
Should walk this nation's servant till I die.

Therefore, a youth of sixteen years, or less,
With others of my land, by pirates seized,
I walked on Erin's shore. Our bonds were just;

Our God we had forsaken, and His Law,
And mocked His priests. Tending a stern man's swine
I trod those Dalaraida hills that look
Eastward to Alba. Six long years went by;
But, sent from God, Memory, and Faith, and Fear
Moved on my spirit as winds upon the sea,
And the Spirit of Prayer came down. Full many a day
Climbing the mountain tops one hundred times
I flung upon the storm my cry to God.
Nor frost, nor rain might harm me, for His love
Burned in my heart. Through love my fast I made;
And, in my fasts, one night this voice I heard,
'Thou fastest well: soon shalt thou see thy Land.'
Later, once more thus spake it; 'Southward fly,
Thy ship awaits thee.' Many a day I fled,
And found the black ship dropping down the tide,
And entered with those Gentiles, by Thy grace
Vanquished, though first they spurned me, and was free.

It was Thy leading, Lord; the Hand was Thine!
For now when, perils past, I walked secure,
Kind greetings round me, and the Christian Rite,
There rose a clamorous yearning in my heart,
And memories of that land so far, so fair,
And lost in such a gloom. And through that gloom
The eyes of little children shone on me,

So ready to believe. Naked of old
Such children saw I, in and out the waves
Dancing in circles upon Erin's shores
Like creatures never fallen! Thought of such
Passed into thought of others. From my youth
Both men and women, maidens most, to me
As children seemed: and oh the pity then
To mark how oft they wept, how seldom knew
Whence came the wound that galled them! As I walked,
Each wind that passed me whispered, 'Lo, that race
Which trod thee down! Requite with good their ill!
Their tongue thou know'st: old man to thee, and youth,
For counsel came, and lambs would lick thy foot;
And now the whole land is a sheep astray
That bleats to God.'
Alone one night I mused,
Burthened with thought of that vocation vast.
O'er-spent asleep I sank. In visions then,
Satan my soul with dire temptation plagued.
Methought, beneath a cliff I lay, and lo!
Thick-legioned demons o'er me drew a rock,
Dreadful as falling mountain. Near, more near,
O'er me it blackened. Sudden from my heart
This thought leaped forth; 'Elias! Him invoke!'
That name invoked, vanished the rock; and I,
On mountains stood, watching the rising sun,

As stood Elias once on Carmel's crest,
Gazing on heaven unbarred, and that white cloud,
A thirsting land's salvation.
Might Divine!
Thou taught'st me thus my weakness; and I vowed
To seek Thy strength. To Tours I turned my face,
There where in years gone by Thy soldier-priest
Martin had ruled, my kinsman in the flesh.
Dead was the lion; but his lair was warm:
In it I laid me, and a conquering glow
Rushed up into my heart. Discourse I heard
Of Martin still, his valour in the Lord,
His rugged warrior zeal, his passionate love
For Hilary, his vigils, and his fasts,
And all his pitiless warfare on the Powers
Of darkness: and one day in secrecy,
With Ninian, missioned then to Alba's shore,
I peered into his branch-enwoven cell,
Half way between the river and the rocks,
From Tours a mile and more.
So passed eight years
Till strengthened was my heart by discipline.
Then spake a priest, 'Brother, thy will is good,
Yet rude thou art of learning as a beast;
Fare thee to great Germanus of Auxerres
Who lightens half the West!' I heard, and went,

And to that Saint was subject fourteen years.
He from my mind the veil removed; 'Lift up,'
He said, 'thine eyes;' and like a mountain land,
The Queenly Science stood before me plain,
From rocky buttress up to peak of snow:
The great Commandments first, Edicts, and Laws
That prop our mortal life:—then high o'er these
The forest huge of Doctrine, one, yet many,
Forth stretching in innumerable aisles,
And, at the end of each, a glittering star:—
Lastly, the Life God-hidden. Day by day
That first and second realm, with him for guide,
I tracked, and learned to shun the abyss flower-veiled,
And difficult heights to climb. This too he taught,
Himself long time a ruler and a prince,
The regimen of States from chaos won
To order, and to Christ. Prudence I learned,
And sageness in the government of men,
By me sore needed soon. O stately man,
In all things great, in action and in thought,
And plain as great! To Britain called, the Saint
Trod down that great Pelagian Blasphemy,
Chief portent of the age. But better far
Loved he his cell. There sat he vigil-worn,
In cowl and dusky tunic hued like earth
Whence issued man and unto which returns:

I marvelled at his wrinkled brows, and hands
Still tracing, enter or depart who would,
From morn to night his parchments. There, once more,
O God, Thine eye was on me, or my hand
Once more had missed the prize. Temptation now
In softness whisper'd, 'Wisdom's home is here:
Here bide untroubled.' Almost I had fallen;
But, by my side, in visions of the night,
God's angel, Victor, stood as one that hastes,
On travel sped. Unnumbered letters lay
Clasped in his hands. One stretched he forth, inscribed
'The Wailing of the Irish.' As I read
The wail of babes, from Erin's western coast
And Fochlut's forest, and the wintry sea,
Shrilled o'er me, crying, 'Holy youth, return!
Walk thou among us!' I could read no more.

Thenceforth rose up renewed mine old desire:
My kinsfolk mocked me. 'What! too scant past woes!
Slave of four masters, and the best a churl!
Thy Gospel they will trample under foot,
And rend thee! Late to them Palladius preached;
They as a leper drave him from their shores.'
In agony I stood of staggering mind
And warring wills. Then, lo! at dead of night

I heard a mystic voice, till then unheard,
I knew not if within me, or close by,
That swelled in passionate pleading, nor the words
Grasped I, so great they seemed and wonderful,
Till sank that tempest to a whisper;—'He
Who died for thee is He that in thee groans.'
Then fell, methought, scales from mine inner eyes;
Then saw I—terrible that sight, yet sweet—
Within me saw a Man that in me prayed
With groans unutterable; and lo, that Man
Was as a bishop habited, and girt
For mission far. My heart that word recalled,
'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities:
That which we lack we know not: but the Spirit
Himself for us doth intercession make
With groanings which may never be revealed.'

That hour my vow was vowed; and he approved,
My master and my guide. 'But go,' he said,
'First to that island in the Tyrrhene Sea,
Where live the high Contemplatives to God:
There learn perfection; there that Inner Life
Win thou, sole strength amid the world's loud storm:
Nor fear lest God on such delay should frown;
For Heavenly Wisdom is compassionate:
Slowly before man's weakness moves it on,

Softly: so moved of old the Wise Men's Star,
Which curbed its lightning ardours and forbore,
Honouring the pensive tread of hoary Eld,
Honouring the burthened slave, the camel line
Long-linked, with level head and foot that fell
As though in sleep, printing the silent sands.'
Thus smiling spake Germanus, large in lore.

So in that island-Eden, I sojourned,
Lerins, and saw where Vincent lived, and his,
Life fountained from on high. That life was Love;
For all their mighty Knowledge food became
Of Love Divine, and took, by Love absorbed,
Shape from his flame-like body. Hard their beds;
Ceaseless their prayers. A sterile soil they tilled:
Beneath their hands it blossomed like the rose:
O'er thymy hollows blew the nectared airs;
The blue sea flashed through olives. They had fled
From praise of men; yet cities far away
Their hermits seized to fill the bishop's throne.
I saw the light of God on faces calm
That blended with man's meditative might
Simplicity of childhood, and, with both
The sweetness of that flower-like sex which wears
Through love's subjection twofold crowns of love.
Oh blissful time! In that bright island bloomed

The third high region on the Hills of God,
Above the rock, above the wood, the cloud:—
There laughs the luminous air, there bursts anew
Spring bud in summer on suspended lawns;
There the bell tinkles while once more the lamb
Trips by the snow-fed runnel: there green vales
Are lost in purple heavens.
Transfigured Life!
This was thy glory, that, without a sigh,
Who loved thee yet could leave thee. Thus it fell:
One morning I was on the sea, and lo!
An isle to Lerins near, but fairer yet,
Till then unseen. A grassy vale sea-lulled
In wound, balm-breathing, with high-fruited trees,
And stream through lilies gliding. By a door
There stood a man in prime, and others sat
Not far, some grey; and one, a weed of years,
Like withered garland lay. An old man spake:
'See what thou seest, and scan the mystery well.
The man who stands so stately in his prime
Is of this company the eldest born.
The Saviour in his earthly sojourn, risen,
Perchance, or ere His passion, who can tell,
Stood up at this man's door; and this man rose,
And let Him in, and made for Him a feast;
And Jesus said, "Tarry, till I return."

Moreover, others are there on this isle,
Both men and maids, who saw the Son of Man,
And took Him in, and shine in endless youth;
But we, the rest, in course of nature fade,
For we believe, yet saw not God, nor touched.'
Then spake I, 'Here till death my home I make,
Where Jesu trod.' And answered he in prime,
'Not so; the Master hath for thee thy task.
Parting, thus spake he: "Here for Mine elect
Abide thou. Bid him bear this crosier staff.
My blessing on it rests: the same shall drive
The foes of God before him."' Answer thus
I made, 'That crosier staff I will not touch
Until I take it from the nail-pierced Hand.'
From these I turned, and clomb a mountain high,
Hermon by name; and there—was this my God,
In visions of the Lord, or in the flesh?—
I spake with Him, the Lord of Life, Who died:
He from the glory stretched the Hand nail-pierced,
And placed in mine this crosier staff, and said—
'Upon that day when they that with me were
Sit with me on their everlasting Thrones,
Judging the Twelve Tribes of Mine Israel,
Thy people thou shalt judge in righteousness.'

So then to Rome I fled; there knelt I down

Above the bones of Peter and of Paul,
And saw the mitred embassies from far,
And saw Celestine with his head high held
As though the Blessed Sacrament it bare;
Chief Shepherd of the Saviour's flock on earth.
Tall was the man, and swift; white-haired; with eye
Starlike, and voice a trumpet clear that pealed
God's blessing o'er the city and the globe;
Yea, and whene'er his palm he lifted, still
Blessing before it ran. Upon my head
Both hands he laid, and 'Win,' he said, 'to Christ
One realm the more!' Moreover, to my charge
Relics he gave, unnumbered, without price;
And when those relics lost had been, and found,
And at his feet I wept, he chided not;
But, smiling, said, 'Thy glorious task fulfilled,
House them in thy new country's stateliest church
With cresset fair of ever-burning lamps,
And never-ceasing anthems.'
Northward then
Returned I, missioned. Yet once more, but once,
That old temptation proved me. When they sat,
The Elders, making inquest of my life,
Sudden a certain brother rose, and said,
'Shall this man be a Bishop, who hath sinned?'
My dearest friend was he. To him alone,

One time a sin had I revealed by me
Through ignorance wrought when fifteen years of age;
And after thirty years, behold, once more,
That sin had found me. He my mission knew;
When in mine absence, slander sought my name,
Mine honour he had cleared. Yet now—yet now—
That hour the iron passed into my soul:
Yea, well nigh all was lost. I wept, 'Not one,
No heart of man there is that knows my heart,
Or in its anguish shares.'
Yet, O my God!
I blame him not: from Thee that penance came:
Not for man's love should Thine Apostle strive,
Thyself alone his great and sole reward.
Thou laid'st that hour a fiery hand of love
Upon a faithless heart; and it survived.

At dead of night a vision gave me peace.
Slowly upon the breast of darkness shone
Strange characters, a writing unrevealed:
And, from that gloom a solemn voice, though sad,
Spake thus: 'Ill-pleased, this day have We beheld
The face of the elect without a name.'
It said not, 'Thou hast grieved,' but 'We have grieved;
With import plain, 'O thou of little faith!
Am I not nearer to thee than thy friends?

Am I not inlier with thee than thyself?'
Then I remembered, 'He that touches you
Doth touch the very apple of mine eye.'
Serene I slept. At morn I rose and ran
Down to the shore, and found a boat, and sailed.

That hour true life's beginning was, O Lord,
Because the work Thou gav'st into my hands
Prospered between them. Yea, and from the work
Went forth the puissance. Strength in me was none,
Nor insight, till the occasion: then Thy sword
Flamed in my grasp, and beams were in mine eyes
That showed the way before me, and nought else.
Thou mad'st me know Thy Will. As taper's light
Veers with a wind man feels not, o'er my heart
Hover'd thenceforth some Pentecostal flame
That bent before that Will. Thy Truth, not mine,
Lightened this People's mind; Thy Love their hearts
Melted; Thy Hope upbore them as on wings.
Valiant that race, and simple, and to them
Not hard the godlike venture of belief:
Conscience was theirs. Tortuous too oft in life,
Their thoughts, when passionate most, then most were true,
Heart-true. With naked hand the naked Truth
Firmly they clasped. In them Belief was Act.
A tribe from Thy far East they called themselves:

Their clans were Patriarch households, rude through war:
Old Pagan Rome had known them not: their Isle
Virgin to Christ had come. Oh how unlike
Her sons to those old Roman Senators,
Scorn of Germanus oft, who breathed the air
Fouled by dead Faiths successively blown out,
Or Grecian sophist with his world of words,
That, knowing all, knew nothing! Praise to Thee
Lord of the night-time as the day, Who keep'st
Reserved in blind barbaric innocence,
Pure breed, when boastful lights corrupt the wise,
With healthier fruit to bless a later age.

I to that people all things made myself
For Christ's sake, on that good already theirs
Building the good they lacked. In courts of Kings
I stood: before mine eye their eye went down
For Thou wert with me. Gentle with the meek,
I suffered not the proud to mock my face:
Thus by the anchors twain of Love and Fear,
Since Love, not perfected, from Fear gains strength,
I bound to Thee this nation. Parables
I spake in; parables in act I wrought
Because the people's mind was in the sense.
At Imbher Dea they scoffed Thy Word: Thy staff
Lifting, I smote with barrenness that flood

Then learned they that the world was Thine, not ruled
By Sun or Moon, their famed 'God-Elements:'
Yea, like Thy Fig-tree cursed, that river banned
Witnessed Thy Love's stern pureness. From the grass
The little three-leaved herb, stooping, I plucked,
And preached the Trinity. Thy Staff I raised,
And bade—not ravening beast—but reptile foul
Flee to the abyss, like that blind herd of old;
Then spake I; 'Be not babes, but understand:
Thus in your spirit, lift the Cross of Christ—
Banish base lusts; so God shall with you walk
As once with man in Eden.' With like aim
Convents I reared for holy maids, then sought
The marriage feast, and cried, 'If God so near
Draws to Himself those virgin hearts, and yet
Blesses the bridal troth, and infant's font,
How white a thing should be the Christian home!'
Marvelling, they learned what heritage their God
Possessed in them; how wide a realm, how fair.

Lord, save in one thing only, I was weak—
I loved this people with a mother's love,
For their sake sanctified my spirit to thee
In vigil, fast, and meditation long,
On mountain and on moor. Thus, Lord, I wrought,
Trusting that so Thy lineaments divine,

Deeplier upon my spirit graved, might pass
Thence on that hidden burthen which my heart,
Still from its substance feeding, with great pangs
Strove to bring forth to Thee. Oh, loyal race!
Me too they loved. Upon the roads all night
They waited me; and, as I preached, the day
To those high listeners, seemed a little hour.
Have I not seen ten thousand brows at once
Flash in the broad light of some Truth new risen,
And felt like him, that Martyr old, who cried,
Girt round with death, 'At last do I begin
To be a Christian.' Foes of ancient years
Have I not seen embrace? Him saw I not,
That white-haired man who dashed him on the ground,
Crying aloud, 'My buried Son, forgive!
Thy Sire hath touched the hand that shed thy blood?'

Fierce Chiefs knelt down in penance! Lord! how oft
Shook I the tear-drop sparkles from my gown!
'Twas the forgiveness taught them all the debt,
High-hearted penitents! How many a youth
Contemned the praise of men! How many a maid,
Oh not in narrowness, but Love's sweet pride
And new-born shyness, jealous for a mate
Himself not jealous, spurned terrestrial love,
Glorying in Love's fair oneness! Race high-dowered,

The Gospel was as some remembered thing
To them; God's Kingdom seemed their native haunt.
Prophesied then their daughters and their sons:—
Each man before the face of each his hand
Lifted on high, and said, 'The Lord hath risen!'
Then, like a stream from ice released, forth fled
And wafted far the tidings, flung them wide,
Shouted them loud from rocky ridge o'er bands
Marching far down to war. The sower sowed
With happier hope; the reaper bending sang
'Thus shall God's Angels reap the field of God
When we are ripe for heaven.' Lovers new-wed
Drank of that water changed to wine, thenceforth
On earth heaven's sweetness breathing. Unto such
More late, whate'er of brightness time or will
Infirm had dimmed, shone back from infant brows
By Baptism lit. Each age its garland found:
Fair shone on trustful childhood faith divine:
Eld, once a weight of wrinkles, now upsoared
In venerable lordship of white hairs,
Seer-like and sage. Healed was a Nation's wound:
All men believed who willed not disbelief;
And sat in that oppugnancy steel-mailed.
They cried, 'Before thy priests our bards shall bow,
And all our clans put on thy great Clan Christ!'

For your sake, O my brethren, and my sons,
These things have I recorded. Something I wrought:
Strive ye in loftier labours; strive, and win:
Your victory shall be mine; my crown are ye.
My part is all but done. For Truth I lived:
I to this people gave that Truth I knew;
My witnesses ye are I sold it not:
Freely did I receive, freely I gave;
Baptizing, or confirming, or ordaining,
I sold not things divine. Of mine own store
Ofttimes the hire of fifteen men I paid
For guard on perilous ways. When prince or chief
Laid on God's altar ring, or torque, or gold,
I sent them back. Too fortunate, too beloved,
I said, 'Can he Apostle be who bears
Such scanty marks of Christ's Apostolate,
Hunger, and thirst, and scorn of men? For this,
Those pains they spared I spared not to myself,
The body's daily death. I make not boast:
What boast have I? If God His servant raised,
He knoweth—not ye—how oft I fell; how low;
How oft in faithless longings yearned my heart
For faces of His Saints in mine own land,
Remembered fields far off. This, too, He knoweth,
How perilous is the path of great attempts,

How oft pride meets us on the storm-vexed height,
Pride, or its fleshly scourge. O Lord, in Thee
My hope!. Thy hand, that in its hold so long
Hath stayed me, will not loose me till I die;
And, thanks to God, the sheltering grave is near.

How still this eve! The morn was racked with storm:
'Tis past; the skylark sings; the tide at flood
Sighs a soft joy: alone those lines of weed
Report the wrath foregone. Yon watery plain
Far shines, a mingled sea of glass and fire,
Even as that beatific sea outspread
Before the Throne of God. 'Tis Paschal Tide;—
O sorrowful, O blissful Paschal Tide!
Fain would I die on Holy Saturday;
For then, as now, the storm is past—the woe;
And, somewhere 'mid the shades of Olivet,
Lies sealed the sacred cave of that repose
Watched by the Holy Women. Earth, that sing'st,
Since first He made thee, thy Creator's praise,
Sing, sing thy Saviour's! Myriad-minded sea,
Even now the secret thrills on thy bright lips
That shake, yet speak not. Thou that mad'st the worlds,
Man, too, Thou mad'st;—within Thy hands the life
Of each was shapen, and new-woven ran out,
New-willed each moment. What makes up that life?

Love infinite, and nothing else save love!
Help ere need came, deliverance ere defeat;
At every step an Angel to sustain,
An Angel to retrieve. My years are gone:
Sweet were they with a sweetness felt but half
Till now;—not half discerned. Those blessèd years
I would re-live, deferring thus so long
The Vision of Thy Face, if thus with gaze
Cast backward I might *see* that guiding hand
Step after step, and kiss it.

Happy Isle!
Be true; for God hath graved on thee His name;
God, with a wondrous ring, hath wedded thee;
God on a throne divine hath 'stablished thee:—
Light of a darkling world! Lamp of the North!
My race, my realm, my great inheritance,
To lesser nations leave inferior crowns;
Speak ye the thing that is; be just, be kind;
Live ye God's Truth, and in its strength be free!

* * *

This day to Him, the Faithful and the True,
For Whom I toiled, my spirit I commend.
That which I am, He knoweth: I know not now;
But I shall know ere long. If I have loved Him,
I seek but this for guerdon of my love,
With holier love to love Him to the end.

If others I have vanquished to His love
Would God that this might be their meed and mine,
In witness for His love to pour our blood
A glad stream forth, though vultures or wild beasts
Rent our unburied bones. Thou setting sun,
That sink'st to rise, that time shall come at last
When in thy splendours thou shalt rise no more;
And, darkening with the darkening of thy face,
Who worshipped thee with thee shall cease; but those
Who worshipp'd Christ shall shine with Christ abroad,
Eternal beam, and Sun of Righteousness,
In endless glory. For His sake alone
I, bondsman in this land, re-sought this land.
All ye who name my name in later times,
Say to this people that their Patriarch gave
Pattern of pardon, ere in words he preached
That God who pardons. Wrongs if they endure
In after years, with fire of pardoning love
Sin-slaying, bid them crown the head that erred;
For bread denied let them give Sacraments,
For darkness light, and for the House of Bondage
The glorious freedom of the sons of God:
This is my last confession ere I die.

NOTES.

Preface, page x. *Ancient lives of Saint Patrick.*

The earliest life of Saint Patrick is Fiacc's Hymn. The third has been attributed to Saint Benignus. The fourth, attributed to Saint Aileran, bears internal evidence of having been written — how long we know not—before the year 774.[1] The fifth life was written by Probus. Colgan regards Probus as an Irish monk of the sixth or seventh century. The sixth life was written by Jocelyn, a monk of Furness, in the early part of the twelfth century. In the 'Tripartite Life' many persons are spoken of as still living who died within the sixth century: but other events of a later period are also referred to; so that 'it may well be believed that we have not got this life in its original form, and that many additions were made to it by transcribers.' Saint Evin, to whom the Tripartite life is attributed, was a Munster man, descended from the celebrated King, Oilioll Olium, who died A.D. 234. 'It is probable,' remarks O'Curry, 'that Saint Evin was living in 504, and that he had seen and conversed with Saint Patrick, who had only died eleven years before this time, or in 493.'

Preface, page xix. *He was of noble birth.*

Saint Patrick, in his epistle to Coroticus, 'states that he was of noble birth according to the flesh, and that his father, Calphur-

[1] See 'Life of Saint Patrick,' by M. Cusack, p. 52.

nius, was a Roman Decurio.'[1] His mother, Conchessa, or Conceis, was the sister of St. Martin of Tours. The family of the Saint is affirmed by the earliest authorities to have belonged to 'Britain;' but whether that term refers to Great Britain, to Brittany, or to other portions of France, is not ascertained. It appears that at the time of his birth his parents were residing at 'Alcluaid,' now Dumbarton.[2]

Preface, page xxvii. *Ireland's vast and almost unknown stores.*

Not a few of the early Irish Legends will be found in that charming book, 'The Story of the Irish before the Conquest;' by M. C. Ferguson, as well as in 'Lays of the Western Gael,' by S. Ferguson, Esq.

Page 3. *When now at Imber Dea.*

A river in Wicklow.

Page 3. *Hills of Dalaraide.*

In South Antrim.

Page 5. *The Imber Domnand.*

The Malahide River.

Page 7. *The second at Ardmacha.*

Now Armagh.

Page 8. *Changed to sea-lake.*

Strangford Lough.

Page 10. *Of Milcho. Once his thrall, &c.*

'St. Patrick's master was King of North Dalaraida; he is thus mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters, A.D. 388: 'Milcho,

[1] See 'Life of Saint Patrick,' by M. Cusack, p. 73.

[2] Ibid. p. 86.

son of Hua Buàin, King of North Dalaraida." The scholiast on St. Fiacc's Hymn states that Milcho dwelt in Arcùil, a valley in the north of Dalaraida, near Mount Mis, now Sleemish. . . . This district is now called the Valley of the Braid from a river of that name. The site where Saint Patrick had the vision in which he was commanded to fly from his master is still marked by the ruins of an ancient church.'—*Life of Saint Patrick*, by M. Cusack, p. 131.

Page 25. *Tara's royal halls.*

The palace of the Ard-Righ, or Chief King of all Ireland, in Meath.

Page 28. *The Staff of Jesus.*

The name of Saint Patrick's Crosier.

Page 28. *Yet they saw nought but the lambs at play.*

As Saint Patrick journeyed to Tara he composed and recited a hymn to preserve him from the snares placed in his way by King Laeghaire. It goes by the name of Saint Patrick's Lorica, or Breastplate, and portions of it are still repeated among their night prayers by the Irish peasantry. It was 'sometimes called the *Feth fiadha*, or instruction of the deer, in consequence of the escape of the Saint and his companions when they appeared to Laeghaire like deer.'[1] It is a touching memorial of that critical day, and a vivid expression of Saint Patrick's devotion. It is as follows:—

SAINT PATRICK'S LORICA.

I bind to myself this day
The strong virtue of the Invocation of the Trinity,
The Faith of the Trinity in Unity,
The Creator of the Elements.

[1] 'Life of Saint Patrick,' by M. F. Cusack, p. 263.

I bind to myself this day
The virtue of the Incarnation of Christ, and His Baptism,
The virtue of His Crucifixion with His Burial,
The virtue of His Resurrection with His Ascension,
The virtue of His Coming to the Sentence of the Judgment.

I bind to myself this day
The virtue in the Love of Seraphim,
In the Obedience of Angels,
In the Hope of Resurrection unto Reward,
In the Prayers of the Patriarchs,
In the Predictions of Prophets,
In the Preaching of Apostles,
In the Faith of Confessors,
In the Purity of Virgins,
In the Deeds of Righteous Men.

I bind to myself this day
The strength of Heaven,
The light of the sun,
The whiteness of snow,
The force of fire,
The flashing of lightning,
The swiftness of wind,
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The hardness of rocks.

I bind to myself this day
The Power of God to guide me,
The Might of God to uphold me,
The Wisdom of God to teach me,
The Eye of God to watch over me,
The Ear of God to hear me,
The Word of God to give me speech,
The Hand of God to protect me,

The Way of God to lie before me,
The Shield of God to shelter me,
The Host of God to defend me
Against the snares of Demons,
Against the temptations of vices,
Against the lusts of Nature,
Against every man who meditates injury to me,
Whether far or near,
Whether alone or with many.

I have invoked all these Virtues
Against every hostile, savage Power
Warring upon my Body and my Soul,
Against the Incantations of False Prophets,
Against the black laws of Gentilism,
Against the false laws of Heresy,
Against the deceits of Idolatry,
Against the spells of Women, Magicians, and Druids,
Against every knowledge which blinds the Soul of Man.

Christ protect me this day
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against the wounding,
That I may receive abundant reward.

Christ be with me, Christ before me,
Christ be after me, Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left,
Christ in the fort,
Christ in the chariot seat,
Christ in the poop,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I bind to myself this day
The strong virtue of the Invocation of the Trinity,
The Faith of the Trinity in Unity,
The Creator of the Elements.
Domini est Salus:
Domini est Salus:
Christi est Salus:
Salus tua, Domine, sit semper nobiscum.

Page 31. *Mount Cruachan.*

Now called Croagh Patrick, a mountain on the coast near Westport.

Page 35. *More late in Alba.*

Scotland.

Page 35. *Rock-bowered Loch Lene.*

Killarney.

Page 51. *From Cruachan.*

The palace of the Kings in Connaught.

Page 60. *The children of Fochlut Wood.*

This wood extended along the coast near the present town of Killala.

Page 69. *The Lay of the Heads.*

The substance of this bard song will be found in an ancient Irish poem, of which a literal translation is given in 'The Dean of Lismore's Book,' page 58. The author of it, Connal Cearnach Mac Edirskeol (or O'Driscol), is thus described: 'He was the most ancient of all the Ossianic poets. He was contemporary with Cuchullain (also spelt Cuchullin), who flourished, according to Irish historians, in the first century. Cuchullain was his foster-son, and, upon his being slain, Connal took vengeance on his enemies by putting them all to death.' This story is narrated in one of the most beautiful collections of old Irish legends, where it ends thus:

—'Conal was beyond sea; but the widowed Eimer sent to acquaint him, that he might avenge Cuchullain. This great knight of the Red Branch found the head of the hero used as a hurling ball. He contended with, and slew, those who had so insulted the remains of his friend.'

Page 86. *In Uladh.*

Southern Antrim.

Page 88. *Not me ye tempted, but the God I serve.*

The love of Truth which was among Saint Patrick's most marked characteristics, is illustrated by some of the earliest legends respecting him in the 'Tripartite Life.' Thus we find the following: 'Conceis was his mother's name. She was of the Franks, and a sister to Martin (of Tours). In Nemtur, moreover, the man Saint Patrick was born; and the stone on which Saint Patrick was born would shed forth water when any one swore a false oath upon it, as if it were lamenting the false testimony. If the oath was true, however, the stone would remain in its natural condition.'[1]

Page 89. *There shalt thou find a boat.*

This incident, recorded in the 'Tripartite Life,' may have suggested several passages in the Medieval Legends. Thus also in Professor O'Curry's 'Lectures on the MS. materials for Irish History' will be found an Irish legend belonging to a very early period, and exactly corresponding with the Spanish legend so beautifully rendered in Archbishop Trench's poem, 'The Monk and the Bird.' It is well known how fond the Spanish poets were of turning to account the legends connected with 'Saint Patrick's Purgatory.' The Irish missionaries carried with them to many countries the recollections connected with their great Saint.

[1] 'Life of St. Patrick,' by M. F. Cusack, p. 372.

Page 94. *Thou shalt not be a Priest, he said.*

Conall Creevan, a brother of Laeghairé, King of Ireland, was one of Saint Patrick's earliest converts, and became his devoted follower. He asked permission to become a Priest; but the Saint commanded him to remain a soldier. The shield marked with the sign of the Cross was ever after called 'Sciath-Bachlach,' or the Shield of the Crozier. This is stated by Dr. O'Donóvan to be the earliest authentic notice found of armorial bearings in Ireland.

Page 104. *The Contention.*

On the mountains and the wild shores of Western Ireland are still recited, in the Gaelic, to eager listeners legends relating to Fionn Mac Cumbal and his son Oisìn, known to the English reader chiefly under the names of Fingal and Ossian. Many poems on this subject are included in 'The Dean of Lismore's Book,' a work consisting of ancient Gaelic poetry, selected from a MS. collection made about A.D. 1514, by Sir James MacGregor, Dean of Lismore, an island in Argyllshire. The early Irish settlements in Western Scotland are largely referred to by the chroniclers and archæologists of Scotland. W. F. Skene, Esq., in his learned introduction to the Dean's book, informs us (though for Scotland as well as for Ireland he claims Ossianic poetry) that, during the four centuries in which the great Celtic house of the 'Lord of the Isles' held sway, there existed 'not only a close political connection between the Western Highlands and Islands and Ireland, but the literary influence was equally close and strong; the Irish sennachies and bards were heads of a school which included the Western Highlands, and the Highland sennachies were either of Irish descent, or, if of native origin, resorted to bardic schools in Ireland for instruction in the language and accomplishments of their art.'

Among the Ossianic poems chanted in Ireland, not a few consist of dialogues between Oisìn and Saint Patrick. They descend from a very remote antiquity, though they have been much modified in the course of ages. The bard, last of his race and

clan, is represented as the guest of Saint Patrick in one of his convents. He accepts the Christian faith, though with misgivings, for he fears that he is thus false to the friends of his youth; and often his wrath blazes out against the monks, who have no faith in the chiefs of Inisfail. The Saint beguiles his outbreaks by praying him to sing the old glories of the land.

Fionn, the father of Oisìn, was the great commander of the Irish Feinè, a standing army elected from all parts of the country, and invested with privileges which made it almost a kingdom within a kingdom. Individually, he belonged to the Feinè of Leinster, the celebrated 'Baoigne clan.' Alarmed by the regal attributes assumed by Fionn, all the provincial kings of Ireland banded themselves together against him, and the battle of Gahbra, near Tara, in Meath, was fought, A.D. 286. In that battle almost all the chiefs of both sides perished, including Oscar, Oisìn's son, who commanded the Feinè. Oscar is always represented as the gentlest, not less than the bravest of the Feinè—the Hector of the Irish Troy.

Fionn and Oisìn flourished, despite these poetic disputations, nearly two centuries before the time of Saint Patrick! Some have supposed, accordingly, that the Patrick of the Ossianic poems was some precursor of the Irish apostle. But the chronological discrepancy would probably have proved no counterweight to the strength of that instinct which made the national imagination insist on connecting the heroic with the saintly period of Ireland. A theme full of pathos and interest was presented by the blind old warrior bard, divided between his devotion to his father and his son on the one hand, and his reverence, on the other, for the teachers of the better faith—between old affections and new convictions—patriotic recollections and religious hopes.

Page 127. *In Limneach.*

Limerick. The far-famed Monastery of Mungret was within three miles of Limerick.

Page 135. *By Sangul's Well.*

Now called Saint Patrick's Well, close to Limerick.

Page 139. *To that Hill he went.*

Knock Patrick.

Page 139. *That green Isle.*

Foynes Island.

Page 140. *Isle of blue ocean and the river's mouth.*

Scattery. There were seven churches on this small island, of which considerable remains still exist.

Page 140. *Of Brendan.*

His legend will be found among the Poems of F. D. Mac Carthy, to whom we are so deeply indebted for his admirable translations from Calderon.

Page 140. *And Sheenan's sound.*

The Shannon.

Page 149. *Clochar.*

Now Clogher.

Page 171. *At Cluaincain in Ross.*

Carrickmacross in the south of the county Monahan.

Page 171. *But thou to Macha get thee.*

Armagh.

Page 175. *Beside his gate sitting in silence.*

In ancient Ireland a singular custom prevailed. In some cases of alleged injury, the defendant had a right to sit down at the gate of the person asserting his claim, and to remain there without speech or food, till the claimant had relented. The weaker party was then said to have 'bound' the stronger 'with his fast.'

Page 175. *His axe let no man sharpen.*

The fate of this tormentor of his slaves is thus recorded in the Tripartite Life, page 479. 'Trian himself proceeded to bind and maltreat the slaves who reported him. His horses bore him off in the chariot, and his driver, so that they went into the lake. He will not arise out of that lake till the vespers of the Day of Judgment; and it will not be to happiness even then.'

Page 201. *Of Eire would make a second Rome.*

Everywhere we can see how keenly Saint Patrick appreciated the special spiritual characteristics of the race to which he had devoted himself, and how clearly he saw that its true sphere of greatness was that of missionary enterprise. Thus we read in the Tripartite Life: 'Patrick went to Es-Ruaidh. He desired to establish himself there, where Disert Patrick is, and Lee Patrick. Cairbre opposed him, and sent two of his people to seize his hands. "Not good is what you do," said Patrick; "if I were permitted to found a place here, the second to Rome of Letha (Italy) with its Tiber running through it would be my establishment with its Es-Rhuaidh running through it; and your descendants would be Comarbs in it."'

Page 201.

And thrice, like some great warrior of the bards,
Your conquering wheels above me you have driven.

The later interpolations have sometimes oddly distorted the meaning of the original tradition respecting St. Patrick. This incident is recorded as though the Saint, the 'meekest man on earth' had actually driven his chariot three times over the prostrate body of Secknall, as well as, on another occasion, of his own sister! To '*drive over*' was doubtless a metaphor once as well understood in Ireland as to '*overthrow*' is among us: but as the story passed from mouth to mouth the metaphor dropped out of it. Thus again, in the record of the Feast on Knock Cae, it is stated

that the half-starved troop of musicians and jugglers who sued to Saint Patrick for food, immediately upon their receiving the 'little wether' were swallowed up by the earth! The meaning obviously is that they disappeared down the bosky slope 'as if the earth' had swallowed them,' and thus in place of an unmeaning fiction we have a singular instance of truthful handling in narrative; for the first thought of a famished outlaw, as of a famished animal, on getting a supply of food, is to escape with it. Those who laugh at quaint stories about Saint Patrick's dispersing Evil Spirits by flinging his bell among them, or driving venomous animals into the abyss, might find much instruction if they asked themselves what inner meaning lay beneath such symbolic records, and what parabolic teaching was conveyed by such actions. The predictions ascribed to Saint Patrick, and which cause to such persons much uneasiness, were in many cases simply benedictions; and as regards the maledictions attributed to him on some occasions, we must remember the remark made by one of his early biographers, viz. that maledictions were frequently but prophetic announcements.

Page 231. *As I preached, the day.*

It was in the main by preaching that Saint Patrick converted the Irish. Thus we read in the Tripartite Life, page 45, 'Patrick went after that to Lemhuin. Finnabhair is the name of the hill on which Patrick preached. Three days and three nights was he at the preaching, and each day did not seem to them longer than one hour. Then it was that Brigid slept at the preaching, and Patrick did not allow her to be awakened.'

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